

Among the Moonshiners

Campbell Waldo Waite

F. TENNYSON NEELY, PUBLISHER
NEW YORK : LONDON : CHICAGO

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AMONG THE MOONSHINERS

BY
CAMPBELL WALDO WAITE.

Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens gold'ner Baum.
—Göthe's Faust.



F. TENNYSON NEELY,
PUBLISHER,
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TO
HON. DAVID L. SNODGRASS,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF TENNESSEE,
OUT OF EQUAL RESPECT FOR HIS
QUALITIES AS A MAN
AND HIS TALENTS
AS A JURIST,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

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AMONG THE MOONSHINERS.

CHAPTER I.

AN ERRAND OF PEACE ENDS IN A "SCRAP."

"Hit war in the shank uv the evenin', suh, that Ben Bentley done come to ouah house fo' ter try an' make up the trouble betwixt me an' his brother Tom. I happened ter be all erlone in the house at the time. I done tole Ben I didn't reckon thar war much use in him undertakin' that job; but he 'low'd he cud make the riffle—he war a conferdent cuss, war Ben—an' so I didn't min' lettin' him try his hand at hit.

"'Look-er-heah, Geo'ge Downing,' sez Ben, 'hain't I allers toted fa'r with yo'?"

"'Deed yo' hev, Ben,' I answered; 'yo's played squar' every time with me; but that ain't er sayin' that yer brother Tom hez, by a dum'd long shot.'

"'But I reckon I'm entitled to er fa'r hearin' on my own 'count,' he answered.

"'Yes,' sez I, 'that's a squar' propersition.'

“‘Wall, then,’ he went on, ‘less git down ter bizness, an’ examine the circumstances like fa’r men. Ter begin with, what is yer main gredge agin Tom?’

“‘In the fust place, Ben,’ I sez, ‘Tom didn’t tote half way fa’r in that gal affa’r betwixt me an’ him. He done tole lies ’bout me ovah an’ ovah agin.’

“‘Geo’ge, Tom nevah tole me a lie in his life,’ sez Ben.

“‘Look yere, Ben,’ I put in, not ’zackly likin’ the ring uv that last speech uv his’n; ‘do yo’ mean by them wo’ds that yo’ hev any doubts ’bout Tom lyin’ ter me?’

“‘I don’t meanter make er pussonal issoo with yo’, Geo’ge,’ was the answer he done flung back at me, ‘an’ I don’t intend fo’ ter hev yo’ make one with me.’ He wuz ez cool ez a cowcumber, an’ kep’ his eye fixed close onter mine.

“‘I war sorter checkmated by this answer uv Ben’s, an’ war half thrown orf my base. But I pulled myself togethah, an’ come back at him this way:

“‘Ben, Tom moun’t er told you no lies, but the woods is full uv the lies he’s ben er peddlin’ round ’bout me.’

“‘Name one,’ sez Ben.

“‘One!’ sez I; ‘hit’s jes’ ez easy ter name half er dozen. But ter staht with, thar’s this one: he done tole ’round that Grace Thorndike said ez how I got right skeer’d

that thar time when her hoss tuck the bits in his teeth whilst I war out ridin' with her, an' that I done los' my head, an' didn't try ter stop him.'

" 'Now,' sez Ben, 'befo' yo' go any funder, less git down ter the bottom uv things. Do yo' know fo' shu' that Grace Thorndike didn't say that?'

" 'I don't reckon I want any bettah everdence fo' yo' than my sister Lizey,' I answered. 'Grace done tole Lizey that she nevah said nothin' uv the kind.'

" 'This war a clincher on Ben, ez he war mighty thick with Lizey, which I didn't like hit right well; fo', though I hedn't nothin' special agin Ben, I hed no use fo' the Bentley breed in gin'ral.

" 'Ben now tuck anothah tack. He would nevah give up, an' war allus fo' 'goin' ter the bottom uv things,' ez he called hit; an', suh, he'd argy an' argy, till the las' dog war hung. He now come at me this way:

" 'Geo'ge, this mattah, ez I put hit up, seems ter lay betwixt my brother an' Grace Thorndike. I don't dispute that she done denied saying them things 'bout yo' ter Lizey, but then—'

" 'But then what?' I breaks in on him right sharp-like; fo' I know'd what wuz comin', an' I war gittin' hot. 'Don't dodge, Ben!' wuz the wo'ds I wound up with.

" 'I ain't er dodgin', Geo'ge Downing,'

he sorter growled out, 'an' I ain't in the habit uv bein' taxed with dodgin'. Ben Bentley ain't one uv the dodgin' kind.'

" 'I cain't help that,' sez I. 'Ef yo' don't want ter be taxed with dodgin', speak out like er man!'

" 'Geo'ge,' sez Ben at this, 'I don't lak' the tone yo's er talkin' in. But I war gwinter say, when yo' interrupted me so ongentleman-like, that I cudden't be expected ter settle a question uv verasserty betwixt my brother Tom an' the gal him an' you war quarl'in' 'bout.'

"Jes' then I noticed Ben's right hand sorter glidin' 'roun' tow'ds his hip pocket. Meantime I war strokin' my whiskahs, but my hand wuz er gittin' up in the neighborhood uv the back uv my neck, whar I cud reach my Bowie, which I kerried in er pocket in the back linin' uv my weskit, in the old-fashioned style. Hit's er mighty convenient style, suh, an' gives er man er right free puhchase uv his alms when he wants ter strike er lick that'll tell.

"Yo' see, suh, I'd ben er takin' two ur three mo' drinks 'an usual that arternoon in the burg, an' somehow I seemed ter grow uglier with every wo'd said by Ben or myself, an' hit 'peah'd lak' Ben wuzn't in er much different way uv feelin' from me.

"Now, suh, when er fellah's nussin' er scrap, he kin mighty easy find merteriul

ter do hit with. I reckon that's purty neah the way with the beginnin' uv differculties the wo'ld ovah. Hit's ez easy ez fallin' off er log ter git into er row, an' hit's ez hahd ez pullin' teeth ter git outer one.

"But ter come back ter my story, suh. I answered Ben's last remahk in this sorter way:

" 'Ef yo' don't lak' my style uv talkin', Ben, don't sneak roun' ez yo's er doin', half-way chahgin' er lady with lyin', jes ter kiver up the smokin' lies of that cussed brother o' yo'n.'

" 'Geo'ge Downing,' sez Ben, mighty determined-lak', 'them ain't the sorter wo'ds ter address to er gentleman.'

" 'I ain't right shu' I addressed 'em to er gentleman,' sez I; an' what on airth peressed me I dunno, but I 'peah'd now ter be growin' coolah an' coolah, an', as I said befo', mo' ugly-lak' at the same time.

" 'I'll gin you jes' three minutes ter take back them thar wo'ds!' then sez Ben, puttin' his hand on his revolver, plain fo' me ter see.

" 'Jes' then I thort I heerd er step at the do', an' though I war mistakened, hit er-curred ter me that I'd feel mighty cheap ter hev er neighbor happen in an' find me showin' the white feathah; an' so I flung this at him:

" 'Ben Bentley, yo's done bahked up the

wrong tree ef yo's taken me ter be er cowahd like yo'self!"

"Now I know'd well ernough that Ben Bentley wuz no cowahd; but when er fellah's bent on er bresh, he's apt ter git off er right smart o' things ez has no bottom to 'em.

"Of cou'se, the next thing wuz fo' Ben to draw his growler; but I wuz too quick fo' him, fo' I hed my Bowie out in er jiffy, an' burried hit in his right shoulder befo' he could draw er bead on me. The lick paralyzed his arm, ez I intended hit fo' ter do, an' the weepen drapped outen his hands ter the flo'.

"Ez I drawed out my knife, Ben begun ter bleed fearful, an' with his left hand he caught me by the weasand, and held me with a turrible grip tell it 'peah'd lak' he mout choke me ter death. But I managed ter git a cut with my knife in betwixt his ribs; and by this time, growin' weak with loss uv blood, he slackened his holt, and fell ter the flo'. I leaned down ter see ef he wuz peggin' out; an' he sez:

" 'Geo'ge, yo've done got me this time.'

" 'Let me lift yo' up in er settin' persition, Ben,' says I, 'an' lean you agin this settee, and then I'll go fur a doctah.'

" 'Hit won't be no good, Geo'ge,' says he; 'I'm er goner, fo' shu.'

" 'Leastways I'll try,' I sez; an' arter

gittin him fixed ez I said, I run ter the stable, an' 'thout waitin' ter saddle er hoss, got on one ba'rback an' put through at lightnin' speed fo' the nearest doctah, who lived a mild ur two up the road, an' caught him jes' ez he wuz ridin' orf ter see a patient. I done changed my hoss fo' his buggy, an' whilst he went back at the same gait I come at I brought up the rear not fur behind, with his buggy an' insterments.

"When I got back ter the house, the doctah had got Ben's clothes stripped orf, an' wuz gittin' holt of the arteries; an' I turned to an' helped him the best I could, an' befo' long we stopped the bleedin'.

"By this time Aunt Hannah come from the nigger quartahs, an' done lent er hand in the bandagin'. Ben wuz mighty weak, but he didn't lose his senses through the hull business. Later on Sister Lizy come home from town on hossback, an' when she seen Ben Bentley layin' on the settee all bandaged up, she gin a sorter screech; but she warn't upsot, an' 'thout stoppin' to inquire how the trouble come erbout, she sot to work helpin' Aunt Hannah, obej'ent-like, runnin' hyere an' thar as nimble as a blue-jay.

"Finally the doctah left, and declah'd Ben mustn't be taken away from the house fo' the night, an' proberbly not the next day. I axed him what the prospect wuz,

an' he said Ben mout pull through, and then agin he moutn't; but at all ervents he must be kept quiet.

"I didn't right like the doctah's looks, an' made up my mind that I war in fo' it. Ben sergested that the mattah be hurshed up; but I saw that hit 'ud be no use, ez his brother Tom would serspect sump'n wuz up. So when the doctah stahted home I rid with him ter town an' gin myself up to the sheriff, 'thout makin' any fight, ez I mouther done; an' fo' the fust time in my life, suh, I got inter the jug.

"An' this, suh, is the entiah story of the differculty, ez hit riz, ez hit perceeded, an' ez hit eended."

CHAPTER II.

A CASE DECIDED OUTSIDE OF ITS MERITS.

The new attorney had asked his client to tell him in his own way, preparatory to proceeding intelligently with his defense, how occurred the encounter which resulted in the client being a prisoner under indictment for assault with intent to kill, possibly to be changed within a few hours to a charge of murder, and the foregoing narration was the response to the request.

The prisoner was a tall, bright-appearing and handsome-looking young farmer, with clear blue eyes and fine auburn hair, belonging, as his language gave evidence, to the middle class of Southern whites, or, perhaps, it would be more nearly correct to say, to the better class of "poor whites," notably those of Eastern Tennessee.

The attorney believed that Downing had told a straight story. The very fact that he had not attempted to palliate his own part in the unfortunate affray was in favor of the entire correctness of his account.

Of course the plan of defense could not be definitely decided on until it was deter-

mined whether Bentley was to live or die.

"It is most unfortunate," said the attorney to his client, "that there were no witnesses to the affair. And there is another unfavorable feature of the case, which is that Bentley's revolver, when the doctor reached him, was in his hip-pocket, uncocked, with none of the barrels emptied."

As he said this, the attorney gave the prisoner a scrutinizing look which expressed more than a direct question might have done.

"I kin tell yo' how that happened, Square," said Downing in response to the latter part of the attorney's remark. "Ben's revolver wuz layin' cocked on the flo', an' bein' afear'd that some of the folks 'bout the house mout pick hit up an' git huht, I done uncocked hit an' put hit back inter Ben's pocket. I hope, suh, yo' don't doubt that he tried ter draw the weepen onter me."

"No," replied the counsel, "I haven't the least doubt of it; but it will be hard work convincing a jury that you placed the weapon back in his pocket."

The prisoner was unable to see this point as clearly as did the attorney; but the latter did not press it upon him.

There was one feature in the case which told strongly with the counsel, but would not be likely to have much weight with

either the court or the jury. This was that, whatever resentment Downing might have had toward Bentley during the heat of the quarrel, there was no malice left in his heart, and it was clearly manifest that his animosity toward Tom Bentley had not, until the conflict began, extended to his brother Ben. If ever there was a repentant perpetrator of a deed of blood, such was George Downing. He spoke, in the protected confidence of clientage, as tenderly of the man he had so terribly stabbed as if he had been his own brother. This manifestation of feeling was so unusual among men of Downing's stamp, that the attorney could not fail to be deeply impressed by it.

After a few days of great danger, Ben Bentley's wounds took the form of erysipelas, which, as he was subject to that malady, threatened to be chronic. This complicated the case, and the defense was obliged to proceed at once with the trial under the indictment of assault with intent to kill.

Downing was placed on the stand to tell his own story; but the prosecuting attorney so badgered and browbeat him that that story appeared in a widely different light from what it did when he told it to his counsel in the seclusion of his cell. And yet the counsel was in no wise shaken

in his faith in the essential truth of his client's original narration. As he had anticipated, he encountered his worst obstacle in the circumstance of the revolver having been found undischarged in the pocket of the "victim," as the prosecutor persisted in denominating the participant in an armed conflict which he himself opened.

The result of the trial was a verdict of a long imprisonment in the penitentiary.

Reginald Chenowith had but recently come from the North; and the result of this his first important criminal case was most deleterious to his professional, and, in no small degree, to his social reputation. He obtained the discredit of having badly mismanaged the case; and even his client, who during the progress of the trial had manifested the utmost confidence in him, became so imbued with the prevalent feeling against him as to refuse to shake hands with him on departing for the penitentiary.

The trial had elicited wide-spread interest in the community, and the overwhelming preponderance of public sentiment was with Downing, and against his attorney.

But among all the friends of the convicted man, there was one, though only one, who stood by Chenowith, insisting

that he had done all that could have been done under the circumstances. This was the sister, Eliza, mentioned in the first chapter. She took especial occasion to impart to Chenowith her views and feelings. She could see the best of reasons, after hearing Ben Bentley's version of the case over and over again, for believing that her brother had been unjustly convicted, but she could see just as good reasons for holding his counsel free of blame in the conduct of the case.

This girl was quite intelligent, and tolerably well educated, and did not use the dialect employed by her class. She was pretty, with the bright blue eyes and auburn hair of her brother, with dimpled cheeks, a sweet, winning smile, and gentle ways. It was not surprising that, in the frequent intercourse he had occasion to have with her during the progress of the trial, the attorney should become somewhat interested in the handsome and winsome sister of his client.

Chenowith had called to the stand, as a witness to the good character of Downing, Miss Thorndike, who was supposed, at least in the rural locality where the Downings lived, to be George's sweetheart. This

was done against her strong protest. Chenowith had not previously examined her as to what she would testify to, but had relied on her interest in Downing to give favorable evidence. When, therefore, she appeared on the stand, he was greatly surprised (not having met her before) to observe, not only by her general bearing, but by her language and intelligence, that she belonged to a much higher social sphere than that in which his client moved. How she should have had such intimate relations with him as she was reputed to bear, the attorney could not comprehend.

Although the testimony given by Miss Thorndike was emphatically favorable to Downing, the tone in which she answered the interrogatories of his counsel indicated a deep animosity on her part toward Chenowith. This was a most puzzling development for him. The only hypothesis that occurred to him in explanation of it was that she had imbibed the prejudice against him as a Northern man, which characterized a certain remnant of the "ancien régime" of the war period.

The feeling in the community against Chenowith, in fomenting which no one was more active than Miss Thorndike, became so strong that it affected his business, and for several months he scarcely received a case. At first the thought suggested itself

to his mind to remove to another locality, and begin his professional career anew; but, upon mature deliberation, as he could recall no errors that he had committed, he resolved to remain, and, breasting the current which had been setting against him, resist it, and live down the so adverse sentiment now facing him.

The moment Chenoweth formed this resolution, he felt born within him a new energy, and a fresh impulse of sterling manhood.

CHAPTER III.

A WRONG RIGHTED.

Although Chenowith's connection with the Downing case had practically closed with the carrying out of the sentence against his client, he did not give up his interest in it, and in fact made it more of a study than he had done during the trial. The ambition had birth in his brain to make this case the fulcrum by which to overturn the weight of prejudice against him.

At first he made an effort to obtain a pardon for Downing; and, the social influence being a powerful factor in this as it is in all Southern communities, he sought to interest Miss Thorndike, among other ladies, in the circulation of the petition to the Executive; but he could scarcely secure an interview with her; and when she did at length consent to meet him, she treated him so coolly that his deepest indignation was finally aroused.

"Miss Thorndike," he said, "did not my sense of propriety revolt at the idea of uttering anything offensive to a lady—"

"Oh, pray, sir," she interrupted, "do not on that account hesitate to say whatever that the spirit moves you to utter. You would by all means better express it now, as you will very likely not have another opportunity."

"Well, then, I will go so far as to say that your course in regard to this case is most unaccountable, and I may add most unjustifiable. I am doing the utmost in my power to relieve from an odious incarceration one who supposedly is or was dear to you; and you seem not only to throw cold water on my efforts, but, if I may judge by your course, actually to oppose them."

"Right here," she said, "I want to correct one singular mistake that you with others have made. I am not the affianced of George Downing. He and I are not even lovers, and have not been. He is my friend, however, and I champion his case as that of a wronged man."

"For whose wrongs I am in a measure responsible?"

"Yes, if you wish it put in that form."

"And yet, seeking earnestly, as I am, not only to retrieve what mistakes I may have made, but to obtain still a reversal of the decree assigning him to imprisonment, I receive no encouragement whatever from

you, and you treat me with persistent discourtesy."

"As you are speaking very plainly, sir, you can not demur if I speak with like plainness. You must know that your peculiar manner of conducting the defense of Downing has occasioned most unfavorable comment in this community."

"And so," he interposed, "in this matter of prejudice you have gone with the current?"

"Call it what you please," she replied. "I sympathize with the common feeling."

"And I shall outlive that feeling, and show the community that it is wrong, and you that you are acting in a manner unworthy of your womanhood. I tell you to your face, and through you to your friends, that I shall not be run out of this place, nor frozen out of it; and that I shall remain here and build up a practice and a reputation. And I defy the whole community, male or female, to suppress me!"

The color rose to her face; all her Southern blood was aroused. She replied, with lips curled in disdain:

"You will be the first Northern man who has lived down the concentrated animosity of a community of Southern people!"

"And I shall be proud to win such a distinction."

With these words he bade her a curt

adieu, and for many weeks saw no more of her.

Not having succeeded in his efforts for a pardon for Downing, Chenowith next bent all his energies toward securing for him a new trial. He went over with patience and circumspection every step taken in the first trial, and re-examined every word of the evidence on both sides.

On careful reflection, there occurred to Chenowith a possible clew which had escaped him in his preparation and management of the case. This clew was furnished by the recollection of a casual remark of his client, when first telling his story, that he had thought he heard the step of some one approaching the house on the night of the quarrel with Bentley. Notwithstanding the bitterness which Downing had exhibited toward him after the trial, Chenowith visited the penitentiary and obtained an interview with him, and elicited from him a careful restatement of the impression momentarily made upon him by the supposed hearing of the step (and now he recalled very distinctly that there *was* a step) on the bloody night in question. Then the attorney noted down, at the mention of Downing, a list of all his neighbors who would be likely to be making a call on him

on the evening named. Among them "thar wuz one espeshurly," said he, "a fel-lah by the name of Conkey, one that was owin' on me, and 'ud be too danged glad of an excuse not ter come in, ur too low-down cowardly to light onto a scrap."

This fragment of information, which Downing did not seem to estimate as of much importance, was eagerly seized on by Chenowith, and on his return home he proceeded to make it available for his purpose. It had hitherto appeared to him exceedingly improbable, if not impossible, that any one who had witnessed the struggle between Downing and Bentley could have refrained from making some mention of the fact, or some casual allusion to it, during the intense interest which the trial had excited in the community, and especially during the pumping process to which, in preparing for the trial, he had persistently subjected every person he could get access to in the immediate neighborhood. But it appeared that he had not examined the man Conkey, who had happened not to be around whenever the inquisitorial attorney was making his investigations. And in Conkey's case Chenowith recognized motives which might have tied the most voluble tongue, while the man himself was one especially given to reticence.

Having delicately approached Conkey in regard to the matter in question, Chenowith became convinced that he was the man whose step was heard by Downing on the tragic occasion; but it was only on taking his deposition under a judicial order, in a suit which Chenowith brought in the Supreme Court for a new trial for Downing, that he was enabled to extort the truth from the timid eaves-dropper and window-peeper.

The substance of this deposition was that on the evening of the difficulty he was about entering the home of George Downing, when he heard a loud and apparently angry conversation between two persons whose voices he recognized as those of Downing and Ben Bentley, in the course of which conversation he distinctly heard this utterance on the part of Bentley, accompanied with the click of a revolver in the process of cocking: "George Downing, I'll just give you three minutes to take back them words;" that afterward, looking in at the window, he observed Bentley and Downing clinching, and saw the hand of Bentley gripped on the neck of Downing; and that, not desiring to interfere in the difficulty, he then left the house and returned home.

On the strength of this fresh evidence, a new trial was obtained, the man Conkey

having proved a better witness in court than Chenowith had anticipated, being at heart an honest man, though a coward and a sneak, if the reader will accept the paradox.

Although Ben Bentley had, to employ the phrase oftenest used among his friends and admirers, "passed in his chips," yet he was so long in doing so that the attempt of the prosecuting attorney to get an indictment for murder against Downing had failed, and now in the re-trial there was little difficulty in obtaining from the new jury a prompt verdict of acquittal on the ground of self-defense.

This result had the effect not only of making George Downing one of the most popular characters in the community, but also of removing to a large extent the odium prevailing against Chenowith, and putting him once more squarely on his feet in his profession.

CHAPTER IV.

A FLIRTATION AS A POULTICE FOR A BRUISED
HEART.

During the progress of the trial, Chenowith had had frequent occasions, as intimated, to confer with his client's sister, Eliza, who had been the good angel of her brother during his imprisonment, visiting him daily, and keeping up his spirits by her hopeful conversation. When her visits were prolonged until late in the day, Chenowith was accustomed to mount his horse and accompany her home to the farm, some half a dozen miles from town; and not infrequently he would remain during the evening. And thus the attorney had found himself gradually becoming more interested in this gentle girl, mainly through sympathy with her duplicate trouble in regard to her brother and her lover. And when Ben Bentley had been finally laid to rest, Chenowith was drawn still more closely to her, and something very like affection began to develop itself in his heart.

Now, Reginald Chenowith had been thus far so busily absorbed in his professional

career, that he had not had much time to devote to female society, and he had as yet had no serious heart-affairs. Therefore he had not made women as a class one of his serious studies, and, as a natural consequence, had not as close discrimination concerning female character as he had in points of pleading and the bearing of evidence. He was in the position in which hundreds of other men, young and old, have many a time and oft found themselves in rushing through this busy world—well equipped with strength of judgment on every other subject of life except the one most vitally affecting all the days to come, and yet ready to fall in love with the first pretty face that appears, or to contract a marriage at the suggestion or through the connivance of a third party, or perhaps merely as a matter of commiseration.

Eliza Downing was a type of ten thousand girls of her mental caliber and emotional nature, only varying from the average in possessing an exceptionally loyal nature, and more than usually shrewd common sense. She could not transfer her affections from one object to another as easily as most girls of her class. She encouraged the attentions of Chenowith more as a matter of reciprocal sympathy than anything else, and took genuine pleasure in his society, without dreaming that she was

meantime fostering a deeper feeling on his part.

Reginald Chenowith, however, who was the soul of honor, had become impressed with the conviction that Eliza Downing had permitted her heart to become entangled in her intercourse with him; and, motivated by a unique mingling of conscientious obligation and tender sympathy, he decided to take this sweet piece of rural ingenuousness under his protecting wing, and make her mistress of a home of which he was beginning to feel the need. So one evening he thus made his declaration to her:

"Miss Eliza, as an honorable man, I owe it to myself, no less than to you, to declare my sentiments toward you. I have been paying you attentions now for a considerable time, and you have a right to know my intentions. I have become so deeply interested in you, and your pure heart and winning ways have so wrought upon my affection, that I have resolved to offer you my heart and hand."

Now, this was a very pretty speech, and did equal credit to Chenowith's heart and head. But, it being the first declaration of the kind that he had ever made to a woman, he had not adapted it with the requisite discrimination to its object. The susceptible Eliza had been accustomed to a

radically different kind of wooing from Ben Bentley—a wooing rather of actions than of words; and therefore she was not moved as some girls would have been by the attorney's neat address. Besides, her heart still clung too strongly to the memory of her dead lover to admit of so early a transfer of it. Therefore, with the frankness that was a part of her nature, she thus answered the suitor who had made the double mistake of being not sufficiently ardent and not carefully enough examining his ground beforehand:

“Mr. Chenowith, I'm a simple country girl, unaccustomed to the ways of society; and I hardly know how to answer you. I suppose I ought to be grateful for the attentions of one so much above me in every respect as yourself, and, indeed, so I am. But I loved my dear lost Ben too devotedly to be able to return your love; and so you will have to take this for my answer, as painful to me as it can be to you.”

Thereupon, having said a very sensible thing, and said it in a very womanly way, and there really being no occasion for any emotion, the tender-hearted girl gave way to a very womanish ebullition of tears.

While candor compels us to say that, Chenowith's declaration having been rather in the nature of discharging a duty than in that of relieving the heart of love's pro-

foundly sweet burden, the effect upon his tenderer feelings of the gentle Eliza's declination had been comparatively moderate, the effect upon his pride and temperamental equilibrium was decidedly immoderate. He was in no slight measure mortified and chagrined at the turn affairs had taken, having flattered himself that the girl would be too eager to accept the great boon he was conferring upon her. In taking leave of her he succeeded in concealing his feelings, but on his way home it is to be feared that he struck the rowels into his steed with a vigor which savored of cruelty.

While Chenowith had not entirely neglected society in the city, he had devoted very little attention to it, having been influenced in such course by the hostility of Miss Thorndike. But he had formed some pleasant acquaintances, and among others that of a Miss Mellington, one of the reigning belles, who had the reputation of being considerable of a coquette, and who seemed to be as favorably as Miss Thorndike had been unfavorably impressed with the struggling young attorney.

Miss Mellington was a thorough blonde—one of the local Jenkinses had very expressively designated her as an “utter

blonde." There was nothing about her that was not light, or blue, or golden. Judged by the exclusively physical standard, she was undoubtedly a beauty; while, if ideality were to be a factor in the estimate, the assignment must fail, for her loveliness was "of the earth earthy," and lacked the element of immortality which belongs to true beauty.

As a diversion from his rejection by Eliza Downing, Chenowith, fancying himself now blasé as to the fair sex, turned his attention to Maud Mellington, with no serious intention beyond an agreeable flirtation—and a most edifying one it proved.

"Now, remember," said Maud, "this is only a flirtation we are engaged in, and there is to be nothing on either side thought or said tending to anything more serious."

"I shall certainly bear this constantly in mind," was the reply; "and will not only bridle my tongue, but put a double padlock on my heart."

"And either is at liberty," she continued, "to exchange agreeabilities with other parties at will?"

"Most assuredly," assented Chenowith.

"Then let the music strike up and the play go on!" said the sprightly blonde, with a gay laugh.

It must be admitted that, for one who

had had no experience whatever in flirtation, Chenowith held his own in this redoubtable match with signal success. To use a Hibernicism, he went into this affair in which there was to be no love, con amore.

And yet, as the flirtation proceeded, the very pleasure of it involved a danger for Chenowith. He found Miss Mellington a most agreeable companion, and her piquant conversation and entertaining ways soon served as an effectual poultice to the wound he had received from Eliza Downing. This was one thing the affair with the blonde had effected. Another thing was that it filled up his daily life far more completely than had his evanescent attachment for the little rural beauty. He began to find that an evening's entertainment was not complete without the presence of the ready-witted blonde—for though her ideas were not deep, they were certainly sparkling.

We have hitherto not described Chenowith's appearance, which, indeed, presented nothing especially to impress the observer. He was strongly built, though his strength was not apparent to the casual observer. He had a cast of countenance indicating determination of purpose, and tenacious energy in the pursuit of his objects; and Maud Mellington was especially

fond of admiring his full head of dark-brown hair and his unusually sparkling dark eyes. Beyond the characteristics and features named, he would only pass in a crowd as a fairly average mortal.

Between these two sharply contrasted characters this rare entanglement ran on, while society gossiped, and queried, and indulged in hypotheses, and came, as usual in such issues, to widely different conclusions.

CHAPTER V.

A MOONSHINERS' SYMPOSIUM.

The manufacture and sale of illicit spirits has for over a quarter of a century constituted a romance in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and other Southern States. The heavy tax levied by the Government on whisky during the civil war (and substantially maintained up to the present time), amounting to double or treble the cost of production, has furnished a perpetually strong temptation to evade it on the part of the inhabitants of the mountain regions, where the contraband manufacture and trade was, until within a very few years, pursued with comparative immunity, and is carried on to no inconsiderable extent at this day.

The efforts of the Government officials, for many years largely inefficient, to ferret out and break up the illicit stills, and to punish their owners and the venders of their product, have been a matter of too common notoriety to be dwelt upon here. The "Moonshiners," as they have come to be

known, have grown to be a distinct class of the community, and, as in the case of the smugglers of Great Britain, have enlisted in their behalf the sympathies of the common people of the region where they prosecute their interdicted traffic, to such an extent that it had at one time become almost an impossibility to obtain any reliable information among them, to aid either in detecting and arresting the "Moonshiners," or in securing their conviction in the courts.

The Moonshiners not infrequently consort with other outlaws, such as the partisans of the various vendettas so prevalent in a number of the States named, and Federal and State authorities are alike baffled by these combinations of persons practically beyond the reach of the law.

Perhaps no locality in all the South is more noted for the presence of these disorderly elements than the chain of Cumberland Mountains in Eastern Tennessee. The illicit stills distributed all through these mountains have for years supplied the inhabitants of the entire region with all the whisky they wanted (and nearly every family considers it an indispensable article of domestic economy) at a merely nominal price; and it is but natural that the rural population of the mountain region should en masse bestow their active

sympathies upon the law-defying class who are so useful to them, and that they should reciprocate by doing innumerable good turns to the hunted "Moonshiners."

We have spoken of this species of outlawry as a romance. One has only to mingle among the mountaineers in the localities named to be impressed with the truth of this asseveration. The Moonshiners have their argot, or slang, their secret passwords, their concealed resorts, their clandestine meetings, their contraband songs, and their traditional hatred of, and deeply planned schemes to circumvent, the detective officers of the Government.

The secret gatherings of the Moonshiners are of course less frequent at the present time than they formerly were, for the reason that the operations of the Federal detectives have gradually undermined their business, and, in so doing, proportionably dissipated its romance.

In the days when the manufacture of contraband spirits was at its height, there was many a midnight symposium of these outlaws, at which social glee ran high, and the rough characters thus congregated made their mountain cabins, and sometimes their mountain caves, ring with weird revelry, which was not always, indeed, of a drunken character, but not infrequently consisted of modulated hilar-

ity, to which at times tone was imparted by the presence of women.

Old Sam Groninger and his big fat wife (the latter weighing over four hundred pounds, noted the whole country round) lived in a cabin up in the mountains, and made their livelihood by the evasion of the law in the direction we have indicated. Mrs. Groninger was an interesting character. She had been a faithful wife to the incorrigible Sam, and had raised a family of children who had rendered quite a creditable account of themselves. She was by no means a bad woman herself, beyond the one trait of defying the law. She read her Bible with great regularity during the intervals of dealing out the product of her husband's industry to her thirsty customers; and the writer of this chronicle can aver in all sincerity that the old lady honestly and firmly believed that she was justified, not only by the needs of the human system, but by the Scriptures which she so diligently studied, in the dispensing of the fiery fluid as freely as she did. And, surely, a kindlier heart or a more hospitable hand could not be found anywhere, in mountain or valley,

than was possessed by old Aunt Tabitha, as she was familiarly called.

The cabin of the Groningers was the resort of three classes of men: First, the Moonshiners; second, the parties to the vendettas, who by their assassinations had made themselves outlaws; and third, the woodmen and charcoal-burners.

One night there was gathered in Sam Groninger's cabin a select *côterie* of Moonshiners and their trusted sympathizers, in a sort of celebration or jubilation over a recent defeat of a posse of Government detectives. There was a smart sprinkling of colored men in the crowd, and music was, of course, one of the features of the entertainment.

Joe Hankins, a shining light among the Moonshiners, acted as chairman on the occasion.

"Sing us a song, Uncle Pete," said Hankins.

"I cain't sing fo' souah shucks widout er fiddle, an' dar ain't no fiddle heah—nuffin' but er sick banjo," answered old Pete.

"You lie, old man!" returned Hankins. "Sile Skinner's got his fiddle out in the shed."

"Luf 'im bring hit in, den," said Uncle Pete, "an' not sneak hit erway lak' hit war sweet whisky."

The fiddle was brought in, and the bald-pated ducky, first replenishing his spiritual nature with a draft from a tin cup dipped out of a bucket containing Sam Groninger's latest distillation, sang to an accompaniment played by Sile Skinner:

DE OLE RED HILLS OB GEO'GY.

O darkies, does yo' b'ar in min'
Dem hills whar growed de yaller pine,
Wid all de fun we luf behin',

When we done come f'om Geo'gy?
No place lak' dat in all dis land,
Whar we done run our banjo-band,
'Mongst dem ole hills ob Geo'gy.

O chillen, han' me down de bow;
A shakedown on de ole ba'n flo'
We'll hab lak' we had long ergo,
Amongst de hills ob Geo'gy.
Doan' want no niggah ter come roun'
Dis night dat wan't done bo'n erpon
De ole red hills ob Geo'gy.

Shu' nebbah darkies wuz so gay;
We done danced all our keers away,
When massa gub us holiday,
On dem ole hills ob Geo'gy.
All night we made de fiddle spin,
An' nex' day plowed de cotton in
De ole red hills ob Geo'gy.

De gals in Chatternoog' am fine,
'Case dey am neah de Geo'gy line;
But, lawd! dey cain't begin ter shine
Wid gals 'way down in Geo'gy,
Dat smiled so sweet in days done gone,
An' played when pickaninnies on
De ole red hills ob Geo'gy.

I reckon I shain't see no mo',
Wid dese ole eyes ob mine, befo'
Ter Jurdan's odder side I go,
Dem ole red hills ob Geo'gy;
But, darkies, when Ole Zeke am gone,
He hopes his bones yo'll burry on
De old red hills ob Geo'gy.

"That thar song hain't hahdly got enough life in hit ter suit me," said Joe Hankins. "Heah, Banty Jim, whar's yo' banjo?"

"Settin' on't," was Jim's chopped off reply. He chopped off his words, and he was chopped off himself, being a woolly dwarf with a look of shrewd cunning and the slimmest apology for raiment.

When Banty Jim sat on his banjo, he occupied all his earthly possessions of realty or personalty. That instrument was his support and stay, his shield and buckler, his companion and friend. He

was never separated from it; he slept with it; he occasionally used it as a plate to eat from; he employed it as a weapon both of offense and defense in his various fights, and it served him as a persuader in mending the pace of a mule he attended. In these divers ways the old banjo was useful, besides ministering to melody.

Banty Jim evidently had an established reputation as a minstrel, judging by the way in which every one pricked up his ears when the bow-legged dwarf's name was mentioned by the chairman.

"Wall, Banty," resumed the chairman, "git yo' banjo in persition and give us somep'n lively. By the way, Banty, what makes Uncle Pete call yo' banjo sick?"

"Unk' Pete sick hisse'f!" answered Banty; "got de mulligrubs."

Uncle Pete jumped after the dwarf, who adroitly dodged him; and the old man went back to his bench muttering:

"'Fo' Gord, I's boun' ter break dat low-down chile's back some er dese days; he cain't play nuffin' on dat busted ole machine o' his'n!"

But, when Banty Jim took his banjo from its position as a seat and began thrumming on it, Uncle Pete was shown to have been moved by the greenest of envy; for, though lacking a string or two, the invalid instrument seemed to start into life.

Banty then sang, assisted on the chorus by the whole crowd, the following:

DE RAISIN'.

“Am yo’ comin’ to de juba-dance,
Dis night dat’s fo’ ter be?
Big Bob’ll come, an’ Uncle Ans’,
An’ some er de qualerty.”

Chorus: Dar’s gwine ter be er raisin’,
An’ de dance’ll flank de raisin’,
Down on de Tennersee.

“Hit’ll be at Barber’s Landin’, Sam,
Whar best ob niggahs goes;
An’ all de gals is gwinter flam
In mighty stunnin’ clo’s.”

Chorus: Oh, doan’ yo’ miss dis raisin’;
Hit’ll be de biggest raisin’
Along de Tennersee.

“Big Lize hez got her *invite*, Sam,
An’ she’ll be at de dance;
She’s jes’ ez happy ez er clam,
An’ so is Yaller Nance.”

Chorus: Yo’ cain’t let slip dis raisin’;
Fo’ yo’ life doan’ miss dis raisin’,
Down on de Tennersee.

“Yas, I’ll be at dat raisin’;
Yas, I’ll be dar fo’ shu’—
Me an’ my gal, an’ Sistah Sal,
And Mose’s banjo, too.”

Chorus: Oh, we’ll be at de raisin’,
We cain’t miss dat dar raisin’,
Down on de Tennersee.

“Oh, won’t we hab er high ole time,
An’ won’t we wake de snakes,
When all de fiddles saws in chime,
An’ when de flo’ we shakes?”

Chorus: We’ll all be at dat raisin’,
We’ll all dance at dat raisin’,
Down on de Tennersee.



“Tell us a b’ar story, Uncle Jake,” said the chairman to an old hunter who had made the mountains his home from childhood; and the company listened to the veteran’s narration with as much interest as if it were entirely constructed of living truth, which scarcely one of the auditors implicitly believed. But there was among these rough revelers very much the same spirit which animates children in listening to stories they pretty well know are “made

up;" and so Uncle Jake's story passed current as genuine coin.

Next came a feature on the programme which embraced emphatically more truth than the narrative of the bear hunter; for it was a chapter of actual experience, of which every one present had had a sufficient taste to know its substantial verity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SYMPOSIUM—CONTINUED.

"Bill Wisner," said Chairman Hankins, "I reckon the boys yere wud all lak' ter hev yo' tell how yo' come it over one uv them thar fly-fish* last week down ter the burg."

The Moonshiner thus addressed—decidedly the keenest-looking man in the crowd—took a comforting swig from the tin cup which constituted the common goblet, and began:

"Wall, yo' see, I know'd fo' the last ten days that the 'flies' wuz arter me, an' I kep' dark most of the time, not showin' myself much 'bout the burg, an' at the same time I didn't allow to go ter the mountings, 'case I know'd they'd track me up heah, and find out whar I wuz at. So I kep' on the dodge, disguised in several ways, an' playin' different pahts, ernough ter make the danged 'flies' half crazy.

"Oncet I wuz rigged out lak' an old apple-woman, an' one er the detective-fellahs he comes ter me an' sez he:

*Government detectives.

“‘Aunty, I kin make hit a objeck ter yo’ ef yo’ll gimme some information ’bout Bill Wisner the Moonshiner, who’s er makin’ his headquarters som’ers in this paht of the city.’

“‘How should I know anything about Bill Misner?’ sez I.

“‘I didn’t say Bill Misner,’ he answered, sorter put out; ‘I said Bill Wisner.’

“‘Oh, Bill Weesner,’ sez I. ‘Stranger, ef yo’d talk good English a body could understand yo’.’

“‘Wall, no matter ’bout the pronouncin’ paht,’ sez he, swollarin’ his feelin’s (fo’ I know’d he wuz mightily put out with my imperdence) ‘yo’ seem ter know sump’n ’bout the man I’s e arter,’ sez he, ‘an’ that’s what consarns me most.’

“‘An’ s’posin’ I does,’ sez I; ‘what good is hit gwinter be ter me fo’ ter tell what I knows?’

“‘Hit’s gwinter be the benerfit of a V ter yo,’ he says, keerlessly holdin’ a fiver ’twixt his fingahs; ‘an’ mo’n that, too, ef yo’ gimme the right clew.’

“‘Look-a-heah, stranger,’ sez I. ‘I’s e a po’ lone widder, suh, an’ I’s e right smaht in want er scads jes’ now, ’relse I wuddn’t think uv such er thing ez this yere.’

“‘But yo’ must b’ar in min’,’ sez he, ‘that yer helpin’ er good cause—yer standin’ in with the Gov’mment.’

“‘Oh, wall,’ sez I, ‘that makes me feel easier; fo’ ef thar’s anything I likes mos’ter do, hit is ter stand in with the Gov’ment. Stranger, I’m with yer.’

“An’ the cuss sorter chuckled all over, lak’ he’d made er big pint; an’ he put the fiver inter my hand. Then, arter makin’ him sw’ar orful strong that he wouldn’t go back on me, I done guv him these yere d’rections:

“‘Yo’ done goes up ter the eend uv this yere street, suh,’ sez I, ‘santerin’-like, an’ a leetle befo’ noontime yo’ll come ercross a old Irishman on the way ter mahket; an’ yo’ tell him you want to see Mistah Hyslop—not Hislop, stranger—an’ that hits on tannin’ mattahs yo’ want ter see him; (be shu’and say tannin’ mattahs, suh;) an’ the old man, ef he’s in the right mood, an’ I ’low he will be ef yo’ don’t rile him—he’ll take yo’ ter within a few do’s uv whar Bill Weesner does bizness. Now, stranger, don’t yo’ done go’ an’ gimme away, fo’ you’ll recollect, I’s a po’ lone widder.’

“‘Not a bit of hit, Auntie!’ sez the danged greeny; ‘I knows my biz too well fo’ that,’ sez he. ‘Heah’s another V.’

“Ez the fool fly-fish wuz er makin’ orf, I called back ter him, an’ sez I:

“‘Yo’ kin do ez yo’ please, suh, but I jes’ want ter drap a hint ter rub a leetle

grease on the old Paddy's hand that yo's gwinter meet up thar, an' it mout'nt be amiss; fo' tho' he's easy ter manage, ez I said befo', when he's rubbed the right way, he's mighty rough when he's rumped.'

"'Thank yo', Auntie, thank yo',' sez he. 'I'm glad yo' mentioned this. I'll not neglect hit.'

"Wall, when the time I hed set fo' him ter meet the old fellah I hed described, thar was I, togged lak' er bog-trotter jes come over.

"'Hello, old man!' sez he.

"'Hillo yoursilf!' sez I; 'ycu begun it.'

"'Hit's a fine day,' sez he.

"'Nothin' exthra, sor,' sez I.

"'Do yo' know Mr. Hyslop?' he asked.

"'Misther Hyslop is it? And how the divil shud I know Misther Hyslop?' sez I.

"'Possibly yo' might answer yo' own question,' sez he, 'ef yo' seen a five dollar bill befo' yo.' An' then he whipped out a fiver, an' offered hit ter me.

"'An' supposin' I knows Misther Hyslop,' sez I, clampin' onter the money, 'in phwat way wud that interest yer honor?'

"'Why, I would like to see him on tannin' matters,' sez he.

"'Wall, sor, Misther Hyslop is a moighty hard man ter find,' sez I. 'If yes'll shtay here till I take home me meat from the

mairket, sor, I'll come back an' thry an' take yo' ter the place whar he kin be found. But, sor, yes must know that I runs a risk in doin' so—'

"'Yes, I know that,' breaks in the fly-fish, 'but I don't want yo' to take this trouble for nothin'. Heah's another five, an' yo' shall have still another if yo' find Mr. Hyslop fo' me.'

"'Sure an' it'll not come amiss,' sez I. 'Now, sor, don't yo' shtir from this shpot till I come back,' sez I; 'fur ef I light onter Misther Hyslop whilst I'm gone I want to know whar to find yes.'

"'All right,' sez he.

"An' I trudged my way erlong, lookin' back oncet in a while to see ef the fool fly-fish wuz still thar; an' the last I seen uv him he wuz keepin' his wo'd; an' then I disappeah'd up er by-street an' blow'd in at poker the twenty good scads I'd done milked him uv; an', fellahs, fo' all I know, the cussed softhead mout be er standin' thar still."

A roar of applause that shook the rafters of the cabin greeted Bill Wisner as he concluded his relation, and he was unanimously voted the liveliest dodger, as he was indisputably one of the "gamest" men, among the entire contraband community.

But the crowning feature of this exceptionally entertaining evening had been held in reserve to the last.

Colonel Jackson, as he was known among his companions, was the oldest member of the company, excepting, perhaps, Sam Groninger. The Colonel was in every respect a faded-out man—faded in reputation, faded in intellect, faded in physique, faded in apparel. In conversation he used but sparingly the prevailing dialect, and needed no certificate of the fact that he had “seen better days.” He had been a man of letters, and was something of a poet, in which capacity he displayed to fair advantage all that remained of a once brilliant mind. His fondness for the fruit of the still, together with certain transactions inimical to good order and the statutes, had reduced him to such an extremity that he was glad to avail himself of the hospitality of the Moonshiners, with whom he had become bard-in-chief.

The Colonel had written many songs and ballads, which he sang to the intense satisfaction of the bizarre assemblies that gathered beneath the rafters of old Sam Groninger’s cabin and elsewhere. These productions insured for him an unlimited supply of the fiery liquid which had been the bane of his life, yet which constituted the only consolation of his declining days.

On the present occasion, at the call of the chairman, after fortifying himself from the common cup, he sang one of these ballads in a voice which yet retained much of its olden flexibility:

THE MOONSHINERS' DELIGHT.

You'll be stirring your stumps
When you light on such chumps,
'Anywhere in this land of luck,
As these Government cops,
Who are harmless as drops
In a shower on the back of a duck;
[Refrain by the crowd:]
As drops on the back of a duck.

When they pounce on us thick,
Like a thousand of brick, [moon;
You might think there was blood on the
But on shaking the tree,
Just like Pat with his flea,
They find they have missed Mr. Coon;
[Refrain by the crowd:]
They find they have missed Mr. Coon.

So we drive here our trade,
And by moonlight is made
Such a nectar as makes the heart gay,
Oils the hinge of the tongue,

Makes the old again young,
And bids trouble get out of the way;
[Refrain by the crowd:]
And bids trouble get out of the way.

O the pure mountain dew
We distill here for you,
From the grain nature keeps in her till;
And the toll you can shake
That the bosses would take,
Who are running the Government mill;
[Refrain by the crowd:]
Who are running the Government mill.

No countryman's load
Do we rob on the road,
'And no poor man disturb in his cot;
But we live and let live,
And we make out to give
To the Devil his due on the spot;
[Refrain by the crowd:]
To the Devil his due on the spot.

The howls of satisfaction that rent the air at the close of each stanza of this contraband canticle boded ill for the safety of any detective who should have been found in the vicinity of the illicit conventicle.

Well stored with the article which constituted the nexus uniting so many ill-assorted spirits in one bond of sympathy, the

assemblage broke up as the mountain tops were beginning to become clearly outlined in the gray of the approaching dawn; and its members wended their separate ways among the forest shadows to sparsely furnished huts, where the main comfort was what each home-comer brought in tin buckets beyond what he could consume during the symposium.

CHAPTER VII.

A MOONSHINER IN THE TOILS.

One day Chenowith's former client, George Downing, came into his office, accompanied by a man whom Downing introduced as a Government officer.

"I'se undah arrest, suh," he said; "an' ez I laid out ter hev yo' fo' my lawyer agin, I 'lowed yo'd lend er hand tow'ds gittin' bail fo' me."

"Well, I'll try," said Chenowith.

And while making this effort, the attorney was surprised to find how easy was the task of procuring bonds for such an offense; and he learned fully, what he had barely suspected before, the secret of the comparative immunity which the Moonshiners had so long enjoyed. That secret consisted in the wide-spread sympathy for them in the community, extending, in some cases, to what were considered the better classes.

Downing's previous imprisonment, and his vindication by an acquittal after a new trial, had made a semi-hero of him, and now again his trial promised to awaken general interest. Chenowith did not ques-

tion his client too closely, assuming that there must be some substantial foundation for the charge against him. Two or three others were arrested at the same time on the same charge, and it looked for a time as if the officers of the law were at last about to make some headway against the persistent offenders who had so long gone practically scot-free.

A few days afterward, in one of his accustomed horseback rides, Chenoweth met Miss Thorndike and Eliza Downing riding together on the road leading to the Downing farm. Now, while under ordinary circumstances this would not be a matter to induce especial notice, on this occasion it arrested his particular attention. Was the proud and arrogant beauty again going to interest herself in Downing's case, and should he have renewed occasion to encounter her as an unwelcome factor in its management?

But then, again, the query rose in his mind, why had not Miss Thorndike, intimate as she was with the Downings, interposed to prevent George from engaging her bitterest enemy as his counsel?

Viewed in any light, he did not like the existent look of affairs, and was at first strongly inclined to withdraw from the case; but on reflection, it occurred to him that the reason for so doing would, by

everyone but himself, be considered an exceedingly inadequate one. He therefore decided to remain in the suit, if for no other reason than to show his independence of character, and his ability to rise superior to the machinations of a designing woman.

Chenowith had prepared the case of Downing for the trial, which was to come off at an early day, and was attending to some other legal matters, when the United States District Attorney called upon him and informed him that Downing had been induced to consent to turn state's evidence against his associates in the "moonshining" cases.

This was a great astonishment for Chenowith, who had received no intimation of the kind from his client. While, in the interest of justice, he would have had no regret at seeing the accused take this step, he was in no small degree chagrined that the first information concerning it should reach him from the opposite side. Chenowith, however, assured the Government counsel that he should do all within his power to further such a movement on the part of his client, if it was seriously contemplated by him.

As Downing had not called at Chenowith's office for some days, the latter concluded to visit and have a talk with him

at his home; and on the evening of the same day when the resolution was formed, he mounted his horse and rode out to the Downing farm.

While not greatly surprised, he was peculiarly impressed at finding there his especial aversion, Miss Thorndike, visiting with Eliza Downing. She received Chenowith with stiff courtesy, and apparently paid little attention to his call at the house. When, however, he asked Downing to step into another room for the purpose of consulting upon matters of business, he caught a peculiar glance of anxiety in the eyes of Miss Thorndike, directed toward the two. What could this mean? What interest could this woman, who had protested that she was bound by no tie of affection to Downing, have in him?

When they were alone, Chenowith said to his client:

"Downing, what is this I have heard about your turning state's evidence?"

"Wall, suh," was the reply, "hit's true that I hev been thinkin' somethin' about that mattah."

"But why didn't you consult me about it? Don't you know that I am the first one that should be informed in regard to the taking of such a step?"

"Yas, suh; but the fact is, suh, that some

uv my friends allowed that you mout be agin my peachin'."

"What friends of yours could have had such an opinion of me as that?" asked Chenowith.

"Wall, suh, I don't reckon I orter tell that."

"I don't reckon there's any necessity of your telling it," indignantly answered Chenowith in his client's own phraseology; "for it is as plain as the nose on one's face who has been putting into your head this utterly baseless suspicion. The 'friends' that you speak of, Downing, may be counted on one finger, in my opinion; and their name is by no means legion, but one, and that one is this omnipresent Miss Thorndike. Now, tell me if I am not correct."

"I 'low yo's 'bout right, suh," reluctantly admitted Downing.

"Well, I want you to understand, George Downing, that it is by no manner of means agreeable to me, as your legal counsel, to have you thus indulging in indiscriminate confidences in regard to the management of your case, such as these with the District Attorney and Miss Thorndike, who you know well enough is my arch-enemy."

Chenowith was losing his patience, and he realized the fact, and this very realiza-

tion enhanced his annoyance and made keener his chagrin.

Downing was greatly perturbed over the turn that matters had taken, and, after hesitating a few moments, he said with more than his usual deliberateness:

"Mistah Chenowith, I reckon hit's 'bout time, suh, to tell yo', which I serpose I kin do in right down dead conferdence—"

"I don't know, Downing," interrupted Chenowith, "that I care to receive any more confidential communications from you, since you have treated me as you have."

"But, suh, yo'll understand matters a heap bettah ef yo'll let me tell yo' this yere thing."

"Well, out with it, then," said Chenowith, impatiently.

"The truth is, suh, that I hain't done gone ter the Deestrick Attawrney," began Downing, "no mo' hain't he done come ter me, consarnin' this matter uv state's everdence. Hit all come erlong uv Miss Thorndike's manergement."

Chenowith opened his eyes. "Where," he asked himself, "does this woman not obtrude with her influence and intrigue?" He was now sufficiently interested to encourage Downing to go on.

"How did Miss Thorndike know," he asked, "that you were engaged in the moonshining business?"

Downing looked sharply at the door to see that it was closely shut, and then, moving his chair nearer to Chenowith's, he said slowly, under his breath, and looking sharply into the face of his attorney:

"The fact is, suh, that—Miss Tho'ndike is—er—detective."

"A *detective*?"

"Er detective, suh, shu' an' sartin'."

"A detective for the Government?"

"That's what she is, suh."

"In the moonshining cases?"

"In them thar cases, suh. An' hit war in that way, suh, that she done got onter my racket in regards to the business; an' hit war her, suh, what stahted the idee uv my peachin'."

Chenowith was well-nigh put out of breath. That this refined and accomplished society woman should be engaged in such an occupation, was the most amazing thing that had yet transpired in her singular course as it had been developed to his cognizance.

The revelation made by Downing had the effect of relieving him from the odium of having negotiated with the Government counsel before consulting with his own attorney; but Chenowith was not favorably impressed with the aspect of matters as they now stood. When he and Downing

returned to the presence of the ladies, Eliza said to him:

"What do you think of the step that Brother George is talking about taking?"

"I am decidedly in favor of it," he replied.

"Oh, I'm so glad! We were afraid you would be opposed to it," she returned.

"May I ask whom you mean by 'we'?" queried Chenowith, who had hardly yet recovered his equanimity, so seriously disturbed in his conference with her brother.

Eliza hesitated, and was momentarily at a loss for a reply, when Miss Thorndike interposed:

"Permit me, Mr. Chenowith, to come to Miss Lizzie's relief, as I have just been discussing this subject with her, and as I am evidently one of those embraced by the personal pronoun involved in your query."

Chenowith colored, and there was suppressed feeling in his tone as he responded:

"And pray, Miss Thorndike, what reason could you have had for assuming or fearing that I would oppose this move? As an attorney I am an officer of the court, and as such it is my duty to promote, not to defeat, the ends of justice."

"Whatever were my reasons, Mr. Chenowith," answered Miss Thorndike, "I am very glad to find that my apprehensions were unfounded."

It may be remarked that the gladness was expressed rather in her words than in her manner. It was evidently a discernment of this fact which moved the attorney to make this parting remark as he took his hat to leave:

"I must be permitted to say, however, that the original apprehension concerning me implied a very poor compliment either to my official integrity or to my personal discretion."

Chenowith rode home in no very amiable mood. The rule of the eternal consistency of things seemed to him violated in this transformation of a society belle into a sleuth-hound of the law. The strange antithesis grew on his mind as he drew near home, and crowded itself into his thoughts as he sat down in his room and reviewed the events of the evening. And what effect was this new development to have on his relations with her who seemed thus far to have proved his evil genius?

After pondering long over this problem, he resolved to pursue the even tenor of his way, and not to be swerved in one direction or the other by her course toward him or his client; and after settling upon this resolution, he betook himself to rest, and slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MUSCULAR RECTOR AND A CONGENIAL
PARISHIONER.

The Reverend Geoffrey Bannister was a man built on nature's largest and most generous plan. He had a massive frame, a finely shaped and impressive head, set on broad shoulders, and large, winning eyes. His mind was as capacious as his person, and, withal, his heart was as gentle as a woman's. His age was between thirty and thirty-five. He had gained a creditable position in his church, and an enviable position not only in the parish over which he was placed, but throughout the entire vicinity.

Miss Thorndike was a communicant of and active worker in Mr. Bannister's church, and it was not at all surprising that he should be attracted by her lively conversation and winsome ways—for winsome ways she had, notwithstanding they had not been manifested to Reginald Chenowith. There was an irresistible smile that nestled at will in the curves and dimples of her rarely beautiful face—a

smile which easily gave place to the frown that occasionally came down from the forehead and assumed the supremacy. The light in her hazel eyes was equally effective in frown or smile, and their long lashes were an exceptional touch of nature's exquisite handiwork. She was rather taller than the average, with a form which had so peculiar a mingling of grace and strength as to cause the critics of her own sex to deny her the merit of delicacy of build, while some of the more malign among them went so far as to intimate that her shape partook slightly of the masculine order; but it was especially noticeable that this criticism was never echoed by any of the male sex. Her plethora of light brown hair was her peculiar physical glory, and crowned a phase of beauty as commanding as it was exceptional.

It was difficult for the quidnuncs of the parish to determine to what degree the peculiar satisfaction of the accomplished rector with his attractive parishioner was reciprocated. There were, indeed, some remarks upon her association with persons of the class to which the Bentleys and the Downings belonged, and in some quarters, though scarcely anywhere among the more intelligent portion of the community, it was believed, as we have seen, that she

had contracted an affection for George Downing. But those who knew more of her domestic life understood that her intercourse with Downing was simply a fact attendant upon an attachment that she had formed for and a patronage that she was extending to George's sweet little sister, whom Grace Thorndike had come across in her horseback jaunts in the country adjacent to the city. If, in her rides to and from Eliza Downing's home, she should have been occasionally accompanied by so stalwart and graceful a rider as young farmer Downing, it gave no especial occasion for remark to anyone who understood all the circumstances.

Like every true Southerner, Geoffrey Bannister was happy when on the back of a horse of spirit and breeding, and he would neither own nor ride any other. He did not consider a cultivated taste (superadded to a natural one) for either a horse or a dog in any wise incompatible with true vital piety. And to make a study of the noble animal employed so freely in the Scriptures to typify activity and strength, and to train and educate him into ways of gentleness and usefulness, so as to make a companion and friend of him, the rector did not find to militate in any degree against the tender care of souls committed to his charge, and the guidance

of his flock in the ways of truth and righteousness. When, therefore, he learned, at an early period of his acquaintance with Miss Thorndike, that she was equally as fond of a horse as himself, it followed, as naturally as that two neighboring streamlets seeking the sea will eventually mingle together, that the rector's favorite companion in equestrian exercise should come to be his fair parishioner.

Many and pleasurable were the rides this so congenial pair took thus together, each mounted on a steed which was the pride of its owner; and in all the country round there was not an equestrian couple more favorably nor frequently remarked upon by the people accustomed to see them ride past their doors.

Mr. Bannister was a man of extensive and varied reading, and of exceptionally fine literary culture; and it was rather upon these rides than during his calls at her home (where they were more liable to be interrupted) that he and his keenly appreciative and likewise accomplished and thoroughly versed companion, indulged in those literary conversations which largely and liberally informed minds can render so reciprocally delightful. In these intellectual entertainments, however, the rector bore the greater burden of the talking, and his deeply interested parishioner a propor-

tionate share of the listening—not by reason of his assumptiveness, but because of her admirable tact as an interlocutor.

As a conversationist, Mr. Bannister was a rare success. Avoiding the two offensive phases of dogmatism and didacticism, he understood how to analyze and dwell on the creations of fiction, to cull the beauties of poetry, to invest with interest the salient points of history, and to spice the whole with discriminating and edifying criticism. And he was wont occasionally to make such incursions into the realm of metaphysics as stirred the profoundest depths of thought in the attentive sharer of these intellectual and ethical diversions.

Nor did the accomplished rector neglect opportunities of manifesting his lively appreciation of the more sensuous phases of existence.

On the occasion of returning from one of the horseback jaunts described, Mr. Bannister said to his pleasing and pleased companion, while tendering his assistance to her in alighting from her horse (assistance really superfluous, as in mounting and remounting her steed she was agility itself):

“Permit me to remark, Miss Thorndike, that you sit a horse with more ease and grace, and manage one with more dex-

terity, than any other lady of my entire acquaintance."

"I am more especially grateful for the compliment," she replied, while a fine color overspread her countenance, "from the fact that the maker of it has the well-earned reputation of being a most accomplished horseman, and therefore a fully competent judge of the qualities he commends."

"If I am not," he responded, "it is certainly my own fault; for I was brought up among horses, and am grateful that such was the case. My father lived in the fear of God and in the love of horses and cattle; and whatever be the fidelity with which the son follows in the parent's footsteps in the one direction, he does not disdain to do so in the other."

"I would about as soon," she returned, "be known as one who did not love one's own kind, as one who had no affection for the brute creation. Your father started you on the right road."

"Speaking of him," Bannister resumed, "recalls a remark he used to make of one of his jockeys, which I think admirably applies to your riding; it was that the man always rode as if he were making it easy for the animal he was on."

"And is not that the secret of good horsemanship?" she asked.

"I assuredly hold it to be such; for if

it is easy for the horse, it will be very likely to be so for the rider," was his reply.

"They tell me, Mr. Bannister, that you were a somewhat noted athlete in your class at college."

"I was surely fond of athletic exercises, Miss Thorndike, and am now, whenever I have an opportunity to indulge in them."

"Then I presume you have no repugnance to the term 'muscular Christianity,' which seems in a large measure to have passed out of vogue."

"None at all. And that reminds me. The phrase and the theme recall the name of a man I have ever held in special reverence, not only as the apostle of 'muscular Christianity,' but as a genius and a bard. And it comes apropos to mention that a mutual friend of ours told me only this morning that you had sung for him most exquisitely Kingsley's 'Three Fishers.' You have never sung it for me, and the next time I call I am going to ask you to do so."

"Why, I'll sing it now, if you'll hitch your horse and come within."

"Gladly."

Without changing her attire, she sat down at the piano and put her whole voice and soul into that ballad which can never wear out,

"Till the sun grows cold,
And the leaves of the judgment book unfold."

"You are in fine mood for singing to-day, Miss Thorndike, which I claim is a great deal, besides the voice. After thanking you right heartily for thus rendering my favorite, I can not let you leave the instrument without giving me your own favorite."

She then sang for him "At five o'clock in the morning," almost as well, he fancied, as Parepa Rosa was in those days accustomed to sing it.

"Now," he said, "if you will indulge me a little further, and sing that favorite of every Christian soul, 'Ave Sanctissima,' I will dismiss you with my blessing."

He joined her in the execution of this grand anthem; and he thought she had never, in or out of church (as had certainly no other parishioner), done such full justice to the piece as now.

Riding homeward, the susceptible rector scored in his memory another of the many red-letter days that were to be ineffaceable there.

CHAPTER IX.

AN AMBUSCADE.

The Rev. Mr. Bannister was in the farthest degree removed from what in popular parlance is styled a sensational preacher. He habitually preached Christ and Him crucified; and his sermons were not customarily interlarded with local applications or personal reminiscences, deemed by so many pulpit occupants essential to the faithful fulfillment of their functions. It was, therefore, a matter of great surprise, and produced a lively sensation in the city and vicinity, when the usually careful and discreet rector delivered a red-hot sermon on the subject of illicit distilling.

“While I have not been accustomed,” he said, in the course of this sermon, “to particularize sins in my preaching, this growing, festering crime, partaken of to a constantly increasing extent by those not in the mountain wilds alone, but within the purview of refined society, and leaguering itself with other crimes and prevalent vices, has gained such a foothold in this

community that I can no longer remain silent."

It was a discourse bristling with sharp points from beginning to end. It constituted the engrossing theme of comment in the city for weeks. The daily papers were full of it, and, as usual in such cases, were divided in opinion as to its policy and its truthfulness. But of one thing there was no doubt: Rev. Geoffrey Bannister was for many a day at once the most highly praised and the most violently denounced clergyman in Eastern Tennessee.

It is safe to say that the Moonshiners in the mountains became thoroughly acquainted with the substance of this rousing sermon, and that wherever the fumes of an illicit still scented the air, there arose curses both loud and deep against the preacher who had dared to be faithful to his calling. Threats of vengeance against him were not confined to the mountains, although they were not so boldly uttered in the lowlands where outlawry did not venture on such outspoken demonstrations.

Meantime the fearless rector kept on his course, heeding no more the menaces with which he was well apprised the air was thick, than the barking of his neighbors' dogs.

But amidst all the excitement caused by Mr. Bannister's discourse (together with

others of like character which followed it from time to time) there was not lacking a substantial resultant benefit; for the Government officials were spurred by it into putting forth extra efforts for the suppression of "moonshining," with no small degree of success.

One day Grace Thorndike accepted an invitation from Mr. Bannister to visit with him a settlement of woodchoppers in the mountains, embracing a number of his poor parishioners. The trip was made on horseback, and the animals of both riders were well packed with provisions and articles of comfort and delicacy for the needy and infirm of the settlement, both those of and those not of the rector's flock.

It was a rarely pleasant ride. The late October frosts had begun to tinge the foliage with dyes peculiar to a Tennessee forest, and the atmosphere was clear and genial and redolent.

Grace Thorndike was in her best mood, and her conversation was as exhilarating to the rector's mind as was her presence to his heart. The theme of converse turning on the vendetta tragedies, Grace said:

"It is a sad commentary on our civilization that, after the rancorous issues of the great civil war have all been settled and

died away, these peaceful phases of nature should be marred by the frequent occurrence of vengeful outbreaks worthy only of a savage state of society."

"Worthy, indeed," he added, "of the Thugs of India. And this, too, among a class of people who nearly all claim to be inside the Christian communion. It is surely most discouraging, and well calculated to moderate the self-gratulatory spirit of us who are accustomed to expatiate on the progress of Christian charity and kindness in our day. As the darkies express it, it ought to make us 'bow low,' and examine our bearings as to truthfulness and candor."

"I am glad to hear you speak so frankly and forcibly," she said. "I have long felt these developments to be a disgrace to our section."

"Yes," he responded; "however sensitive we as native Southerners may be to the taunts of the people of the North, we must in common honesty acknowledge that these things constitute a blot on our enlightenment and a serious check to our moral and material advancement. The revolver and the bowie-knife are doing for us what the stiletto has done for Italy."

"Poor Italy!" she exclaimed in an affirmative refrain. "With a civilization reaching back two or three thousand years, and

now the home of banditti and the resort of assassins! What a lesson she teaches to us of the 'Sunny South'!"

"The lesson," he said, "should be heeded by the executives of our States, and by our legislatures; and while the General Government is awakening to the dire results, direct and indirect, of the contraband practices of the smuggling Moonshiners, the several States should not be behindhand. The most stringent laws should be enacted and enforced, stamping out these vendettas as the British Government stamped out in India the Thugs and their murderous trade. And the one thing could be done here as successfully and thoroughly as the other has been done there."

The conversation now changed to more cheerful topics, and they talked of literature, and art, and kindred themes, each enriching the discourse as only highly cultured minds are capable of doing.

Reaching at length the place of their destination, the two distributed among the scantily provided families of the little settlement the articles they had brought, accompanying them with such kindly and genial words of encouragement and advice as made the breasts of the recipients glow with a double gratitude.

Mr. Bannister and Miss Thorndike were both born and reared near these moun-

tains, and each felt an attachment for the denizens of the lowly huts which canceled the social distance between benefactors and beneficiaries, and caused the latter to regard the former as really and truly friends.

The sun was working down toward the horizon when the two benevolent visitors started on their homeward ride, speeded on their way by the benedictions of the honest-hearted sharers of their bounty.

Again their conversation was engaging, and of the many jaunts they had taken together Grace Thorndike was mentally deciding this to be the pleasantest, when, as they were passing through a narrow defile, there came the sharp crack of a rifle, as it were directly over their heads; and immediately Mr. Bannister, placing his hand to his side, reeled, and would have fallen from the saddle but for the steadying hand of his companion, who held him in his seat until they had gotten through the defile.

No further shots were fired, and when out of the ambushade they halted, and Miss Thorndike aided her attendant, who was constantly growing weaker from loss of blood, to dismount; and, by tearing her scarf into bandages, she succeeded in temporarily checking the flow of blood from his wound. After a brief respite, he was enabled, with her aid, to remount his horse,

and by easy stages they made their way for a few miles, when they were overtaken by a farmer with a wagon, who conveyed the now nearly exhausted rector to town.

The shot of the concealed assassin had been aimed at the heart, and had not come far short of its destination. It was manifest that the attempt at murder had been made by some ultra-vindictive Moonshiner, smarting under the effects of the notable sermon.

The surgeon who examined the wound looked very grave, and declared that the case required the closest attention, and especially the most careful nursing. Acting upon the latter suggestion, Grace sent to the rector the old servant of her family, a big-hearted, patient-souled mother in Israel; and at the same time was unremitting in her own attentions to the companion of her perilous ride.

CHAPTER X.

A WOOLLY-HEADED PURITAN.

Aunt Phebe proved an excellent nurse for Mr. Bannister, and under her assiduous and kindly ministration he made satisfactory progress toward convalescence. She understood thoroughly how to entertain him while repressing his tendency to talk, and, as he was afterward glad to admit, materially contributed to lighten the tedium of his confinement. She would sing for him, pray with him, and talk to rather than with him, in a fashion so motherly as to be quieting and soothing instead of wearying or disturbing.

One of the songs that the wounded rector was fond of listening to from the devoted old soul, was the following:

GWINE TOW'DS DE KINGDOM.

O brudder b'arers ob de cross,
Doan' min' de heat or bitin' fros',
Doan' min' de ragin' ob de gale,
De drivin' rain, or beatin' hail.

We's gwine erlong, we'se gwine erlong;

We's gwine erlong, wid pra'r an' song;
We's gwine tow'ds de kingdom.

O sistah sannahs, walk yo' neat;
Git yo' close down to Jesus' feet,
An' keep yo' lamps er bu'nin' bright,
Fo' He'll come lak' er tief at night.
We's gwine erlong, etc.

O doan' git weary on de way;
Quinch not de sperrit, watch an' pray,
An' keep de golden gate in sight,
Fo' soon 'll break de mo'nin' light.
We's gwine erlong, etc.

De days ob mou'nin' in dis vale,
Dey'll soon be lak' a tolden tale,
When in de Marster's sheepfol' bin
We's all done gaddered safely in.
We's gwine erlong, etc.

After Mr. Bannister had gained so much strength as to be considered out of danger, he ventured upon some general conversation with his faithful nurse, which she did not deem it deleterious to discourage.

"Aunt Phebe," he said one day, "you appear to have a very sweet faith."

"Yas, suh; de faith am sweet—sweeter'n Aunt Pheeb' huhse'f."

"That is a finely drawn distinction, Aunt; but I must say that I have never

heard any one complain of your disposition."

"Nobody cain't read de hea't, Mars' Barnister," she responded, "'cept de bressud Marster. Ole Aunt Pheeb's hea't mout be full ob dead men's bones fo' all yo' knows, ur fo' all de wo'ld knows. We musn't done fo'git what de Scriptur says 'bout de hea't bein' desateful 'bove all tings, an' desp'utly wicked, Mars' Barnister."

"Yes, Aunt Phebe; but one's life ought to count for something as an index, and your life has been for all these years an open book to be read of all the world."

"An' arter all de wo'ld am troo' readin' dat book, Mars' Barnister, hit am yit ter be read by Him dat doan' go by out'd appeah'nces, an' done looks troo' fo'ms an' sarrymonies."

To use a phrase that has almost passed from slang into good usage, Aunt Phebe had "got her work in" in the matter of bearing testimony against the peculiar faith of the rector, for which, soul of charity as she was, she had no charity whatever.

Mr. Bannister took the rebuke in good part, and attempted no defense.

"Well, Aunt Phebe," he said, "we are all bound for the same destination; and although we take different paths, I apprehend that it's the spirit with which we

walk that will determine whether we get there."

"Not altogedder," persisted the old mother in Israel. "We mout git onter de wrongest kinder road, an' hit mout lead us straight ter de debbil befo' we know'd it. De way am straight dat leads ter salvation, and dem what done walks in hit doan' need no cretches sich ez readymade pra'rs an' nightgowns in de pulpit."

This was another body-blow at the "man of sin," which Aunt Phebe had too good an opportunity to deal not to embrace; and the act of dealing it did her soul too much good to admit of her apologizing for the offense it might have given. But offense there was none, and, as before, the vicarious victim received the punishment in meekness.

This proved a good day for opportunities for Aunt Phebe. Not long after the foregoing preachment, the gentle soul found occasion to administer another admonition to her patient—one that had long lain on her soul. The rector said to her:

"Aunt Phebe, I long to get out and have a lively gallop on my horse."

"I'se afeard, Elduh, yo' heaht's too sot on dat fancy ho'se ob yo'n. Yo' cain't tote yo' ho'ses and dogs wid yo' inter de kingdom, Elduh."

Now, Aunt Phebe had too much down-

right good sense to impute sinfulness to the practice of horseback-riding per se, especially in a section of country where it is the nearly universal mode of locomotion. But she had well-defined notions concerning the proper limitations and modulations of the practice as pursued by preachers of the gospel. Like many other godly persons, white as well as black, she deemed it inconsistent and incongruous for a clergyman to be mounted upon a horse of good blood, which had never had the life dragged out of him by hard work, and stepped off at a lively and proud pace, with grace in every motion. As vital piety, in the estimation of this type of Christians, consists to a large extent of a fagged-out appearance in walking through the vales of the world, so the adjuncts of such piety should consist in those things, animate and inanimate, from which the elements of beauty, and grace, and elegance, and mobility have been eliminated.

The rector answered Aunt Phebe in all kindness:

“Why, no, Auntie, I can’t take my horses and dogs with me any more than I can take with me the sweet sunshine, the refreshing showers, the starlight and moonlight, the fragrance of blossoming flowers, the songs of birds, or the gentle deeds of friends, such as this nursing of yours; but, blessed be

God, we shall be able to take with us into His kingdom the memory of these things—of these beings, and circumstances, and conditions of pleasure and beauty and delight, that have been ours to enjoy during the golden seasons of our earthly existence. And I can not bring myself to think that the powers above would have us deprive ourselves of objects of comfort and joy, simply for the reason that they are beautiful or graceful, or lively.”

Aunt Phebe was not as well satisfied with the point she had made in this bout with her patient as with that she had scored on the former occasion; and while she listened to his glowing words, embodying a phase of rhetoric never without a deep effect on the darky mind, she had secret misgivings that the rector had gotten the best of her.

At this stage in the conversation between patient and nurse, Grace Thorndike happened in, and, glancing with concern toward the former, said:

“I’m afraid, Aunt Phebe, that you have been talking too much to Mr. Bannister.”

“No—not a word too much, Miss Thorndike,” interposed the rector. “All that she has said has had a quieting instead of a disturbing effect on my mind, I can assure you. Aunt Phebe, I’ve found, is a person who reads the Scriptures, and retains what

she reads. And though she and I may not view things in the same light at all times, she knows what she believes, and in whom she believes, and is as ready as the Apostle Peter to give a reason of the hope that is in her, 'with meekness and fear.' "

"I don't need to be told that," said Grace, smiling. "Aunt Phebe has worsted me too many times in controversy to permit me to doubt it. Why, I owe my main familiarity with the Scriptures to my searching them for passages wherewith to refute her arguments, which, when found, have usually failed of their purpose."

The old saint indulged in a thoroughly human grin of selfish satisfaction at the duplicate encomiums she had received—an indulgence for which Mr. Bannister found it in his heart fully to forgive her.

"I hope Aunt Phebe hasn't sung you tired," said Miss Thorndike to the rector.

"No more than she has prayed me tired," he responded. "After every one of her songs, as after every one of her prayers, I have felt as if I were one stage nearer the kingdom."

"Has she ever sung for you 'Seekin' de Lo'd in faith?' "

"No, Miss Grace," answered the old nurse; "I hain't done sung dat song fo' de Elduh [Aunt Phebe persistently called him

'de Elduh'], 'case I 'lowed hit mout be too sof' fo' him."

"She means too tender, Mr. Bannister," explained Miss Thorndike. "However, Aunt Phebe, if I were too ill to be permitted to talk much, that is just the kind of a song that I should like to have sung to me, especially by you. Please sing it now for me, if not for Mr. Bannister."

In a sweetly tender tone, which was delicately tremulous in the refrain, Aunt Phebe complied with the request:

SEEKIN' DE LO'D IN FAITH.

When ter my Lo'd in faith I goes,
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day,
His marcy lak' a ribber flows,
Eb'ry bressud day.

When Satan comes a-roarin' roun',
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day,
God's right ahm flings 'im ter de groun',
Eb'ry bressud day.

Temptations swahm lak' 'Gyptian flies,
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day;
But pra'r done scatters dem lak' lies,
Eb'ry bressud day.

I holds fas' ter de promerses,
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day;

Dey stills de ragin' ob ae seas,
Eb'ry bressud day.

Wid lamp done trimmed an' bu'nin' bright,
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day,
I'se keepin' Jurdan's sho' in sight,
Eb'ry bressud day.

My Lo'd waits fo' me oberhead,
Eb'ry day, eb'ry day,
An' soon de golden streets I'll tread,
Eb'ry bressud day.

"Well, Auntie," continued Grace, "I met the doctor on the way here, and he makes a good report of the progress of our patient. He says that we can have him out riding in a few days."

"But doan' luf de Elduh ride tow'ds de mountings," said Aunt Phebe, smiling.

"Indeed, Aunt Phebe," interposed Mr. Bannister, "that is the first direction in which I shall go as soon as I am permitted to get about; for I have an engagement to fulfill up there, which I can not neglect. The people's highway is free for all to travel, and I do not intend to be driven from it by those who lurk in ambush. Besides, I am anxious to tell my good friends the woodmen up there how well I have been taken care of by one of the best nurses in the world."

Although Grace gave the rector a look of undisguised admiration, yet with her lips she uttered:

"I shall urge him against going into those parts again soon, Aunt Phebe."

"De Lo'd hab set de seal ob his condemnation on er stubbohn an' stiff-necked generation," chimed in the old nurse, in the way of confirmatory admonition.

"By the way," said Grace, "I yesterday passed and repassed the spot where the shot was fired at you."

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Were you attended?"

"No. I went to see how those poor parishioners of yours whom we visited were getting on."

"I am very grateful to you," he responded, "for thus remembering them; but I don't think any friend of mine, male or female, would find it very safe in the adjacent region, no matter on what errand bent."

The great-souled rector, in his apprehension for the safety of his gentle friend, had for the nonce forgotten his own disregard of danger in his expressed determination to venture into the same region.

"My instincts," replied Grace, "lead me to feel an immunity from assassins."

"Nevertheless," he responded, "I earnestly ask you to promise that you will not go

again in that direction until I can accompany you."

"Well, I'll promise that, on condition that the first time you ride thither you will let me go with you."

"You's bof boun' ter fly in de face ob Proverdenche," grumbled Aunt Phebe, out of patience with these two spurners of peril.

And Grace Thorndike departed for home, leaving in the breast of the recuperating rector an enhanced estimate of the character of the woman before whom his higher manhood had learned to bow in loving reverence.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EPISODE OF TYBEE ISLAND.

Perhaps no seaside resort in the United States has less reputation, or is frequented by smaller crowds of health-seekers, than Tybee Island; but this does not alter the fact that that place possesses a most delightful beach, albeit one which has an unfortunate drawback in the strong undertow of the receding tide. This is not a serious objection to experienced bathers, who understand how to adapt themselves to the conditions of ebb and flood-tide.

There were gathered on the piazza of one of the hotels of Tybee, on a sunny day after the usual bathing-hour had passed, a number of groups of guests, embracing several individuals from the Tennessee community constituting the principal scene of our story. Among these it so happened that there were two persons widely separated by prejudice and antipathy—Grace Thorn-dike and Reginald Chenowith.

One of the groups embraced Miss Thorn-dike, accompanied by Eliza Downing as an attendant, a Miss Gaston (noted as a bril-

liant conversationist), and other fair Tennesseans; while included in another group were Chenowith and Maud Mellington, with some of her associates.

The two groups would have come together but for the feeling between Miss Thorndike and Mr. Chenowith. A good deal of lively conversation prevailed in both circles, and considerable of it consisted of "cross-references," as the cyclopedists term them. This was a game which had to be played with the utmost delicacy, to prevent its degenerating into an infraction of one of the well-recognized rules of decorum. Indeed, it may be safely classed within those customs more honored in the breach than in the observance. In this case there was a basis of feeling underlying the peculiar intellectual recreation, which gave it an exceptional spice.

Miss Thorndike having made sundry remarks to her immediate friends, in a tone so nicely gauged as not to be noticeably elevated, and at the same time to be distinctly caught by an attentive ear in the other group, but a few yards distant; Miss Mellington, as spokeswoman for the latter, would reply, in an indirect way, in language addressed to those immediately about her, apparently apropos of or in reply to remarks by them made, yet really in response to the utterances of Miss Thorn-

dike; both sides being careful to avoid, by any glances or motions toward each other, the least indication by which an uninitiated person could discover that any specific reference was intended, singly or collectively, to the individuals composing the opposite side.

On the day in question, Miss Thorndike opened this interesting game by the following remark to one of her lady friends:

"I like to come to Tybee, because I am certain to meet here, as a general rule, only the better class of Southerners."

"By the way, Mr. Chenowith," said Miss Mellington, shortly afterward, "recurring to the subject of besetting sins, [which, of course, was improvised for the occasion,] there is a serious one—a sin of omission—with which I regret to have to charge you."

"Indeed, Miss Maud?" replied Chenowith. "But, really, if you have only one such sin to lay at my door, I shall consider myself extremely fortunate; for I have to make the humiliating confession to you, that of all my besetting sins it is concerning those of omission that I am most frequently impelled to cry 'Mea culpa, mea culpa!' But please name this especial sin."

"It is that of not standing up strongly for your own section."

"And do you deem it advisable," asked

the attorney, quickly catching the drift of the blonde's utterance, "to keep up this contest of sectional sentiment?"

"By all means," answered Miss Mellington; "it contributes to enliven social intercourse, adds a zest to conversation, and makes things pleasanter all round."

"For my part," replied Chenowith, "I look on this tendency to perpetrate sectional differences as of the same nature of the vendettas which we ought all to condemn. If you persist in the greater sectional or race hatred, how can you condemn the lesser factional hatred?"

"I would not condemn it," responded Miss Mellington, in a voice whose keen satire was most admirably modulated; "I would foster and promote it. It tends to elevate and refine the classes who indulge in it, and also to conserve a healthy tone in the community."

Pretty soon this keen thrust was responded to by Miss Thorndike on this wise, so as to meet the last remark of Miss Mellington:

"One reason why I am always glad to see Southerners particular to associate with people from their own section, Miss Gaston, is that I too often see a disposition on the part of Southern men and women, influenced by the offensive missionary spirit of Northern emigrés, to exaggerate the mis-

fortunes and defects of our social system. Take, for instance—”

But the illustration remained uncompleted, for there came a sharp interruption to this interesting contest (in which Miss Mellington thus far clearly had the advantage), in the form of a piercing cry from the beach, where two females, a mother and daughter, were struggling with the ebbing tide, being new-comers, and unacquainted with the regulations for the safety of bathers. They had not yet gotten beyond their depth, but the undertow was sucking them strongly out, and it was manifest that without assistance they must in a few moments be lost.

There were many of the throng on the hotel piazza who grasped the situation, but there were only two who were equal to the emergency, the remainder being either panic-stricken or lost in hesitation as to what to do. The entire crowd, however, as by one common impulse, started for the beach. But the two persons referred to rushed as with lightning speed far ahead of the rest, and reached the water's edge in an astonishingly brief space of time.

These two persons were Mr. Chenowith and Miss Thorndike. The latter ran like a deer, disregarding all ideas of propriety, even distancing her attendant, the nimble-

footed Eliza, raised in the fields and woods.

On his way, without stopping, Chenoweth threw off his coat; and when he reached the water, with his pocket-knife, which he had opened while running, he hastily cut the lacing of his shoes, and had them off his feet in a twinkling. And just then Miss Thorndike, who had about kept up with him in his speed, and had on the way unfastened and cast aside her outer skirt, seeing what he was doing, hastily said:

"Will you please also cut my shoelaces?"

It was the first kind expression he had received from her. He speedily did as requested, and instantly her boots were also off.

"It's a good precaution," he hurriedly said; "but if you are not a strong swimmer, I advise you not to venture in. The tide sucks out very powerfully. I think I can hold the women until the safety-men reach us, who are coming yonder along the beach."

While he said this he was pushing into the water without waiting for her.

"Oh, I can swim very well, even against the tide," she responded.

The rescuers reached the imperiled bathers just in time, for they were in water up to their necks, and the undertow prevented

their remaining longer on their feet. Chenowith caught the mother as she was fainting through exhaustion, and clinging to her daughter; while Miss Thorndike seized the latter and held her head above water. Thus the two rescuers, at no small degree of peril to themselves, sustained the women until the safety-men arrived with their ropes and drew the whole party ashore.

While Chenowith and Miss Thorndike were walking from the beach to the hotel, they were greeted with deafening cheers by the crowd, women vying with men in the noisiness of their demonstrations. Miss Thorndike presented a not very graceful sight as to her apparel, her skirt, which she had left on the beach, having been so trampled by the throng that she was obliged to make the passage in her underskirt; but the homage paid her seemed more enthusiastic on that account.

After changing their garments, the hero and heroine of the day reappeared on the piazza, and received the warmly enthusiastic congratulations of their friends; but it would be entirely safe to assume that neither on that day nor on any subsequent one, during the stay of the two at Tybee, was resumed the entertaining cross-reference discussion so abruptly broken off by the thrilling episode at the beach.

CHAPTER XII.

"HE DIED IN HIS BOOTS."

"No, Jim, not in the dahk, nur yit in the stahlight ur moonlight, but in the broad daylight—that's the time when I lay out ter hev er settlement with Geo'ge Downing; that's the time o' day that suits er gamey man the best."

"All right, Tom; I'm with yer, whatsomever yer decide on. I want ter see yer make a good an' clean job on it when yer undehtake it. I'll stand by yer ter the death—thar's my hand on't."

"That's what I'm er countin' on, Jim; an' I'm gwinter do the bizness befo' long, fur hit's time the thing war orf the docket. As the preacher said at campmeetin', Ben's blood crieth out er the ground fur vengeance."

"Did he speak spesherly uv Ben's blood, Tom?" asked Jim with some surprise.

"Not 'zackly, but I know'd well enough what he meant," replied Tom Bentley, who was as free in the application of the pulpit orator's words to his own vengeful intentions, as the ordinary commentator is in

his application of texts of Scripture to his peculiar dogmas. "I've larned that Geo'ge is gwine on er trip ter the mountings to-morrer, an' when he comes back I perpose ter meet him on the way an' hev hit out with him."

"Uv co'se yer know what er dead shot Geo'ge is," suggested Jim Doyleston.

"Yas, we've all know'd that er long time," answered Tom; "but I don't reckon I'm much uv er slouch myself when 't comes ter drawin' er bead on er man."

"'Deed you ain't, Tom."

"All I ask uv yo', Jim, is ter stand by an' see fa'r play."

Just then a thought struck Jim Doyleston. He hadn't many thoughts, this man Doyleston; but once in a while he stumbled upon an idea which had a modicum of sense in it. These men had had no practical experience with the duello, that code occupying too high a grade in belligerent ethics to be adapted to their capacity. But there was a common law observed among them called "fa'r play," which embraced very much the essential principles of the "code of honor." The thought which had struck Jim Doyleston was thus expressed by him:

"Look-a-heah, Tom; I don't jes' like this idea uv two on us jumpin' onter one. I undehtand very well that yo' perpose ter

do the shootin'; but Geo'ge 'll hev no friend with him, will he?"

"I don't reckon he will," answered Tom.

"Then 'strikes me hit wouldn't be 'zackly fa'r play. I ain't no friend uv Geo'ge Downing's, an' I'd nat'rally be on yo' side, whatsomever happened. An' then 'twouldn't have er right good look ef the matter come befo' the authorities."

Jim Doyleston's ideas of "straight deal-in'" and "fa'r play" were peculiar, to say the least. He had no scruples against "goin'-a-gunnin'" for a man, and deliberately planning his murder; but he deemed it eminently proper to give the "game" he was gunning for a chance for his life, though that chance, considering that he was to be taken when unprepared, would be necessarily a slim one. It was somewhat such a feeling as the veteran bear-hunters of Texas are fabled to have had, which, when they came into close quarters with their game, inspired them to give Bruin a "fa'r show," so as to make a "squar' fight" of it.

So it was arranged that Tom Bentley should meet (in plain English waylay) George Downing in the "clearins'" on his way home, and "have it out with him;" and, as a concession to "fa'r play," that Jim Doyleston should be out of sight, but within hearing.

This was deemed the proper method of introducing the second act in the vendetta begun by George Downing's fight with Ben Bentley—a vendetta which took its place with others of its kind, perhaps to endure for generations; and the surviving brother felt it to be a duty to society, to his dead kinsman, and to all the Bentleys yet to come, to lie in wait on the highway and practically assassinate the man who, five minutes after his deed was done, would have given all he had in the world to be able to undo it. -

The next morning George Downing, mounting his horse, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and started for the mountains. He was unusually buoyant in spirit, for he was feeling especially gratified over the prospect of evading a second incarceration in the penitentiary. He sang and whistled cheerily, and the passers-by whom he met smiled to see so fine a looking young fellow in so jubilant a frame of mind.

Having completed his business in the mountains, Downing started on his way home. When he came to the "clearin's," riding carelessly along humming a love-song, he looked up and saw in the middle of the road, on horseback, a few rods in front of him, his old enemy, Tom Bentley.

Not a word was said by either. So entirely unexpected was this encounter to Downing that for a moment he was disconcerted, and this momentary hesitation gave his assailant the advantage, for he leveled his rifle directly at Downing's heart and fired, making a center shot.

George Downing sat for a moment like a gladiator pierced to the death, yet unwilling to yield the vital spark, and a slight shiver ran through his frame, as one sometimes sees it run through an ox staggering under the slaughterer's finishing blow; then he raised his rifle, cocked it, and was about to bring it to bear on Bentley, with an aim which directly covered the heart of his assailant, and would surely have proved its unerring deadliness, had not his own strong and protesting heart, loth to yield its tenancy of the iron-like frame, suddenly ceased its beating, causing the muscular arm to drop, the eye to lose its brightness, and the lifeless frame to fall limp and prone to the earth. The trigger of the weapon was pulled by the hand which in the very act lost its cunning, and Tom Bentley missed by a second or two of time the same death he had dealt to his victim.

And thus George Downing "died in his boots," as he had always wished to die, and as it is the fond dream of men of his stamp

at all times to die. He died looking his foe in the face; he died in the effort to deal a death blow to the man he hated; he died the death of the tiger bitten by the cobra; but, to those of his own class, a halo encircled him as he yielded up his spirit, and in their traditions he was enshrined as a hero, for he "died game."

It was in scarcely any respect a civilized death; and yet it was a death in the heart of civilization, in the blazing, culminating light of the nineteenth century, and in an atmosphere breathing of Christian influences.

Tom Bentley coolly dismounted and walked up to where lay the corpse of his enemy, and, after taking one look at it, threw his rifle across his shoulder, and sauntered unceremoniously away, leaving the finest-formed and strongest and most graceful and agile of all the young men of his class in the entire country round, lying with his unerring rifle by his side, while his faithful horse, which he had trained to stand still when a person fell from his back, stood looking on in silent wonder.

There was an inquest, and a verdict by the coroner's jury of "death by the hand of some person or persons unknown," while nearly every member of the jury knew well

enough whose was the hand that aimed the fatal shot; for so it beseemeth the average coroner's juror in that zone, in such cases, to report. There was a momentary though feeble ebullition of energetic activity on the part of the county authorities, and some sharp talk of vigorous prosecution; but, as nineteen out of twenty citizens were well aware would be the case, the affair was permitted to blow over as scores of others of the kind had blown over, only to be brought freshly to mind when the community should be startled by the next tragedy in the catena forming the grand record of the vendetta.

There were those who were strongly inclined to the opinion that the Moonshiners were at the bottom of the Downing tragedy, as Tom Bentley was pretty generally believed to be connected with them; but be that as it might, the instrument in the summary taking off was all the same, in the performance of the act, satisfying to the uttermost a long-nursed "gredge."

There were very likely not a few in the city who secretly rejoiced at Downing's "removal," as it was believed, by those who had most excellent opportunities of knowing, that he constituted a sort of connecting link between the respectable contingent of the patrons of the Moonshiners "in the burg," and the denizens of the moun-

tain resorts; and that, were his tongue once fairly unloosed, he could have shaken some of the dry bones in the community to a most sensational extent. And had this result been effected, the credit therefor would have been due to the admirable management of Grace Thorndike, who had had Downing first under espionage and then under training for many months.

But George Downing's case having been transferred to a higher court, the state's evidence he had stipulated to render was never entered of record in the court below, but was relegated to a hearing where there will be no apprehension of an interruption of the proceedings by the destruction of the leading witnesses.

Perhaps three months after George Downing went to his death, Tom Bentley opened his door one evening in response to a knock, when two or three barrels of a revolver were successively emptied into his breast, and he fell forward on the threshold—fell on his face, without a groan, with his boots on, as his foe had fallen; and his comrades and friends unanimously passed the eulogy upon him that he also "died game," so that he took his place beside his recent victim in the pantheon of vendetta heroes.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEAPING COALS OF FIRE ON AN ADVERSARY'S
HEAD.

A new administration had come into power; and the Attorney-General being a personal friend of Chenowith's, the latter was surprised at receiving the tender of the appointment of District Attorney, which he accepted, although, in view of his recently increasing practice, the proffered position did not come as gratefully as it would have come a year or two previously.

While turning over to Chenowith the papers of the office, the retiring incumbent said to him:

"I desire to call your attention, as I have called the attention of the Department of Justice at Washington, to the peculiar difficulties under which the Marshal has labored with regard to the illicit still business. The extensive sympathy of the inhabitants of the mountain districts with the 'Moonshiners' has hitherto constituted an almost insuperable obstacle to the execution of the law; but I believe that the Marshal has at length hit upon a policy

which will ere long prove successful in effectually breaking up this detestable business. One feature of this policy is the employment of female detectives."

"But is it not true that as a rule only women of shady character can be induced to act in such capacity?"

"Far from it, although I am aware that such is the prevalent impression. You will have a confirmation of my assertion when I mention the name of one of the Marshal's detectives who has done most excellent work of late. This is Miss Thorndike."

"Miss Grace Thorndike?"

"The same."

Chenowith did not betray the fact of his having previously received this information from his client. The outgoing official continued:

"I trust that you will guard this secret as carefully as we have done heretofore, for the efficiency of the lady in question depends upon our keeping her confidence inviolate."

"I shall not betray her," said Chenowith, "although she has no especial claims upon my favor. I presume you are aware of the bitter resentment that she has manifested toward me since I have been a member of this community."

"Yes," was the response, "I was cognizant of that feeling on her part; and now

you have the opportunity of heaping coals of fire upon her head."

Pondering on the singular turn of affairs, which had wrought such a signal change in the relations between her whom he had deemed his evil genius and himself, Chenowith sat one day in his private office, when the Marshal came in and thus addressed him:

"There is a matter connected with my office concerning which I had intended to speak to you, and which I have delayed until the rumored selection of my successor makes it imperative that I broach it at once. It relates to the position of Miss Thorndike as detective."

"It does not lie within the purview of my duties to interfere with her position," responded Chenowith, "even were I disposed to do so, which I certainly am not."

"I am glad to hear you speak in this manner," returned the Marshal, "for it is essential that entire harmony should prevail between the two offices."

"I presume," said Chenowith, half abruptly, "that you have, in your remarks, reference to the feeling understood by some, and, doubtless by yourself among the number, to exist between Miss Thorndike and myself."

"Yes," replied the Marshal, evidently relieved; "to confer with you concerning that matter is the object of my visit."

"Well," resumed Chenowith, "when you have occasion again to confer with that lady on the subject, you may say to her that my private feelings will in no wise color or affect the discharge of my official duties. And so far as her position is concerned, her tenure of it and the confidences relating to it shall remain undisturbed except by some action on her part."

"That, sir," the Marshal replied, "is clearly and frankly and manfully said, and I shall with pleasure and satisfaction convey to Miss Thorndike the substance of our interview."

The next day a card was handed Chenowith as he sat at his desk, on which he was somewhat surprised to observe the name of Miss Thorndike. He rose as she entered his private office, but was no more demonstrative than ordinary politeness required. He left it to her to open the interview.

"The Marshal," she said, "has detailed to me the conversation he had with you yesterday, and he thought it proper for me personally to express to you my appreciation of the honorable sentiments you uttered."

This was said in a very deliberate tone, hardly in keeping with the strong expression she had made.

"I have simply taken the position which my official duty requires me to take," he replied, "and disclaim being entitled to any credit whatever."

"Nevertheless," she returned, "it is a matter of obligation on my part to recognize services, official or otherwise, interested or disinterested, which have constituted a favor to me."

There was an embarrassing pause, which Chenoweth did not attempt to break, being determined to let her lead the way in whatever there was further to be said.

"There is something more, sir, that I should like to say on this occasion," she resumed, in the same measured tone as before, "if it would not be encroaching too far on your time."

"Whatever you have to express, Miss Thorndike," he responded, "consider yourself free to utter it; for if I haven't the leisure to listen to it, I will readily make the leisure."

"Thank you, sir," she answered with a perceptible bow. "To be as brief as possible, then, with the appointment of a new Marshal the chances of preserving my incognito will materially diminish. The present Marshal having been a comrade of

my father's in the war, an old friend of our family, and I may say a second parent to me, has been a shield for me during my connection with the Government, rendering it practicable for me to perform services which would have been impracticable under any other incumbent of the office. In view of these facts, I have thought that it would perhaps be advisable for me either to resign my position, or to change the scene of my operations, and remove to some locality where I am unknown, and where I have the confidence to believe that I could still render myself useful to the Government. What I have to ask is, if such a movement would be seconded on your part?"

"Most assuredly, Miss Thorndike," promptly answered Chenowith; "although I do not see as clearly as do you the necessity of a change. I did not seek this office, and therefore I am free to recommend to the authorities at Washington the retention of the Marshal in his position; and I understand that a number of leading men of the party in power will join in such recommendation."

"That, sir," she said, with a nearer approach to being moved into a manifestation of feeling than she had yet made, "would obviate all difficulties. I did not dream that such a movement was on foot. But I

have already kept you too long, and will not detain you further."

Nor did Chenowith seek to detain her further. She left his office without any additional expressions of obligation, and he bowed her out without breaking through the ice of formality which had prevailed throughout the interview.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BLOODY CONFLICT WITH MOONSHINERS.

"As you have indicated a desire to participate in one of our raiding expeditions against the Moonshiners," said the Marshal to Chenowith one day, "there will be a good opportunity to do so to-night, as we are going to make another effort to capture old Sam Groninger's contraband still, and at the same time Sam himself, who is the head and front of moonshining operations within an extensive district. He has a large plant, and is coining money out of it. We failed the last time we tried to trap the old fox, on account of the treachery of our guide; but I think we'll get him this time, for we have a mountaineer to guide us who knows his haunts and his habits, and who is thoroughly trusty. You had better disguise yourself, as I shall do; for these desperate devils would only be too glad of a chance for a shot at either you or me."

It was arranged that the Marshal and his men should start from different points, and at different hours, and come together apparently casually on the way, so as to give no opportunity for Groninger to be in-

formed by his sympathizers along the route, as was generally the case in these expeditions.

The Marshal and Chenowith, masquerading as countrymen, and mounted on scrawny mules, started about sunset, having some twenty miles to go to reach their destination, whither they calculated to arrive by midnight or a little later. The men of the posse were picked up as the night wore on, until the whole force of nearly a dozen had gotten together.

The posse surrounded the cabin so noiselessly that the occupants had not the least intimation or inkling of the impending attack, until the front door was burst in by a battering ram in the shape of a huge stick of timber manned by the whole party, with the exception of two or three men stationed, at the suggestion of the guide (and a very good suggestion it proved), in the rear of the cabin, to guard the outside cellar door, artfully concealed by dirt and straw, which had on two former occasions afforded a convenient avenue of escape for old Sam and his men.

The first to enter the cabin was the mountain guide, who showed his familiarity with the place by going directly to an immense chair, which was occupied at nearly all hours, day and night, by Sam Groninger's big fat wife, who, for compen-

sation mainly, but not infrequently without it, from this cabin throne dispensed liquor by the cup to thirsty mountaineers, only the initiated few of whom were aware that beneath her gigantic seat was the door to the capacious cellar in which was manufactured the "mountain dew" dealt out by her.

Aunt Tabitha was popularly supposed to sleep in her chair; and on one occasion the Federal officers, having arrested her for alleged moonshining, were obliged to release her for the reason that they could not get her through the door of the cabin. But on this night, at least, she had been able to leave her chair and betake herself to rest in a comfortable bed in a sort of alcove or recess; and the giantess was just waddling out from her retreat in her night-clothes to see what was the matter, as, under the direction of the young mountain guide, the men of the posse were prying open the cellar door, fastened on the under side. Aunt Tabitha stood with her hands raised, speechless with astonishment.

As the door yielded and the guide raised it, he received in his breast a ball from the revolver of old Sam Groninger, who had come to the head of the stairway. A second ball followed, but as Chenowith, who was standing by the side of the guide, reached out to seize the old Moonshiner's

weapon, he received in his shoulder the missile intended to do the unfinished work of the first. The wound inflicted was a painful, though not a disabling, one.

The guide started slightly as the ball struck him, but made no outcry, and instantly leveled his own revolver at Groninger and fired, with the result that the old Moonshiner fell with a curse to the bottom of the stairway; then the plucky guide, with a shiver, staggered and fell, and would have been precipitated into the cellar, had he not been caught by Chenowith.

"Draw him one side," said the Marshal under his breath to Chenowith, "and be careful with him. I will assist you in a moment. We may have more wounded to attend to. But you are hit yourself," he continued, seeing blood on Chenowith's shoulder.

"Nothing that will prevent me from looking after this young man," replied Chenowith, "who is in a very serious condition."

Then, directing the men of his posse to place the muzzles of their rifles in the trap-door opening, the Marshal called down the stairway in these words:

"Whoever is down there may as well strike a light instantly, [every light in the cellar had been extinguished,] or I shall order my men to fire at random, and some of you will be sure to bite the dust. Every

avenue of escape is guarded, and the sooner you give up the better. You can come up the stairway one by one, first bringing up the old man who is wounded."

There was very little hesitation in obeying these orders, for the Moonshiners, of whom there were some half a dozen, saw at once the hopelessness of the situation; and the striking of a light was an intimation of surrender.

The Marshal had had no need to caution Chenowith to handle tenderly the wounded guide; for a thrill ran through the frame of the District Attorney while lifting the bleeding form and seeking some place to lay it; and when the sufferer enunciated feebly: "There is an unoccupied room in the corner yonder—please take me in there," he knew that he held in his arms the form of a female!

Tenderly depositing his bleeding charge upon the bed in the room indicated by her, Chenowith hastened to obtain the assistance of Aunt Tabitha, whom he found bending over the prostrate body of her wounded husband, and to whom he stated the situation. Just then the Marshal, having left the hand-cuffing of the rest of the prisoners to his men, joined Chenowith, and said to the old woman:

"Aunt Tabitha, I am a good nurse, having learned the art where you did, in the

army; and if you will look kindly after that girl in the other room, I will finish binding up this wound of your husband's, and take as good care of him as you could yourself."

The old mountain of flesh did not exactly like the idea of nursing the individual who had apparently given her "old man" his coup de grace, and who, she now comprehended, had "gin 'em all away;" but she accepted the situation, and did as good a piece of bandaging on the stricken guide as an experienced surgeon could have done.

As soon as Chenowith obtained an opportunity, he said to the Marshal:

"Isn't that guide Miss Thorndike?"

"It is."

"Why didn't you inform me before?"

"She begged me not to do so."

"Strange that we should meet under such circumstances! Did she know that I was to accompany you?"

"Not until the last moment."



The Marshal's experience in the Confederate army served him a good turn in this emergency, for he improvised, out of such bedclothes as he could find in the cabin, a pallet to be strapped upon the back of a mule, which made a very comfortable am-

bulance for Miss Thorndike; and after Aunt Tabitha had dressed her wound, she was placed by Chenowith and the Marshal on the pallet, and the expedition, headed by the posse with their prisoners, started for home.

Miss Thorndike stood the trip very bravely, enduring her pain without a groan. When about half way home, it was deemed advisable for her to stop for the night at a small village, she being too weak to continue the trip with safety. The Marshal remained with her, and the next morning, as the surgeon who had been sent for to the city during the night pronounced her condition very critical, it was arranged to have her taken care of in the village until she could safely be taken home.

In order to furnish the acquaintances of Miss Thorndike an explanation of her disablement, it was given out that she had been shot during an expedition to the mountains (such as she was known frequently to make), by a Moonshiner, in revenge for her sympathy with Mr. Bannister, which she had taken no pains to conceal, but had persistently and often offensively expressed. And this explanation, while misleading, was in its literal sense by no

means as far from the truth as many another white lie reserved for angel's tears to blot out, as was done by my Uncle Toby's oath.

The fact that Maud Mellington had kept her agreement with Grace Thorndike concerning reciprocal exposures, rendered it easier to avoid a disclosure of the secret of the fair detective, which was seriously threatened by the wide publicity given to the conflict in the Groninger cabin. But this peril was happily tided over, and the secret confined to a small circle of Government officials. It was not, indeed, even suspected by Mr. Bannister, who promptly called on the wounded heroine on hearing of her misfortune, and extended to her such sympathy as only he could do—sympathy delicate and appreciative, which could not fail to prove especially grateful to her under the circumstances.

CHAPTER XV.

A TRANSITION STRANGE.

The wound which the new District Attorney received in the struggle in which he had participated as an amateur, but in which he had rendered so good an account of himself, confined him to his room for a number of days. And while lying on his bed of pain, strange speculations prevailed in his brain, and equally strange sensations in his heart.

The experience of the exciting conflict with the Moonshiners had with a startling suddenness turned the entire current of his thoughts and feelings. Hour by hour he had found himself becoming more and more a prey to intense anxiety as to the condition of his immediate co-participant in that bloody affair; and frequent were the messages of inquiry concerning her dispatched by him to the Marshal's office.

What was this weird metamorphosis from repugnance to tender sympathy?—for tender the sympathy was, notwithstanding his unwillingness, in its inception, to admit it to be so.

Was it the result solely of the thrill felt

in old Sam Groninger's cabin when he held in his arms the bleeding form of the brave mountain guide, stricken down in the first successful assault upon the law-defying banditti; or had it been in progress since he was forced to admire the courage of the same person on the beach at Tybee? Whatever it might be, the feeling was a present fact which could not be disguised. The development of the new phases of this to him singular woman's character had surprised his heart into an inclination which was setting in toward her with irresistible force. That development now presented a fresh challenge to his admiration, and afforded a healthy contrast with the traits of character with which he had been brought in contact during his recent peculiar social experience.

The very first time the surgeon permitted Chenowith to leave his room, he mounted his horse and rode out to the little village where Miss Thorndike had been confined with her wound, in order to inform himself of the progress she was making. He found her still in considerable pain, yet maintaining that cheerfulness of spirit which those who were most intimate with her had never known to desert her.

After greeting him with great cordiality—the first greeting of that nature that he had ever met from her—she said to him:

“I thought at the time that the service you did me in turning away the second bullet from old Sam Groninger’s revolver, was a useless one; but it appears that I was mistaken, for they tell me that my chances for life are now good.”

“And will you permit me to say that no one can be more rejoiced than myself to know that the tide is thus turning?”

“It is surely pleasant to hear you speak thus. It is a singular coincidence that we should have faced danger together a second time.”

“Very singular. And, as our blood mingled on the latter occasion, the fates must have determined that we should cease to be enemies.”

“Well,” she returned, “suppose we do so cease. There’s my hand for a truce.”

As he took the finely tapered hand, white and thin, he resisted a strong temptation to press it to his lips. Naturally he could not help contrasting the tone in which she now addressed him with that she employed in her interview with him in his office. Then she had carefully measured her words, showing no emotion whatever; now all her being spoke in her eyes, and there was an utter absence of reserve

and constraint. He recognized the thorough frankness of the true Southern woman that she was, with no discernible trace of what he had once looked upon as offensive superciliousness.

"And let me employ the first moments of our truce," he said, "in acknowledging the invaluable services you have rendered to the Government, not only in the investigations leading up to this last capture, but in your courageous conduct in the encounter with the outlaws whom you tracked to their lair."

"Thanks! Discriminating appreciation is the highest reward of earnest effort in the performance of duty," she responded. "You have learned by blood-bought experience what the servants of the law have to contend against in this warfare with desperadoes; and the Government is at last learning that it is no child's play, and is addressing itself in sober earnest to the task before it."

"But, by the way," she continued, glancing at him closely, "I perceive that your shoulder moves awkwardly. That duplicate ball of old Sam's must have plowed deep."

"I should have been willing," he responded, "to have it plow still deeper, had that been necessary in order to do its proxy work."

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"Should I endeavor to acknowledge my gratitude to you for warding off that shot," she resumed, "I presume that you would reply, as on a former occasion, that you had only done your duty—in other words, that you did not thank me for my thanks."

"Somehow," he replied, "your acknowledgment on this occasion would have more life and feeling in it than it had then, and therefore my response would be correspondingly different."

"Now, to change the trend of the conversation, I have some information to impart which I think will be gratifying to you. The Federal authorities, recognizing the recent energetic policy pursued by the Marshal toward the Moonshiners, and the resultant successes, have yielded to the well nigh unanimous request of citizens of opposite political opinions, and consented to his reappointment."

"I thank you heartily for bringing me the intelligence," she responded, "and I thank you still more heartily for the part you have taken in accomplishing this to me very important object. You may be certain that it will be a long time before I forget it."

After an agreeable and not too protracted conversation, Chenoweth left the bedside of his wounded companion in the thrilling midnight raid, bearing with him

the corpse of an antipathy which in that raid had received its death-blow from the revolver wherewith the desperate old Moonshiner had done his best to snuff out the existences of the two by whom that antipathy had been cherished and nourished.

A number of other calls on the invalid (not very widely separated) followed on the part of Chenowith, who, in addition to the deep impressions made on his heart, had gradually awakened to the realization of one significant fact, to-wit: That as he had gotten a grade higher in intellectual life when he became associated with Maud Mellington after his experience with sweet though unversed Eliza Downing; so, now that he had penetrated the larger and broader existence of Grace Thorndike, he had made an equally marked ascent, not only intellectually but esthetically.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAKING AN INQUISITION OF THE HEART.

Miss Thorndike was now at home, and recovering rapidly. Chenowith's calls began to increase in frequency, and the enhanced cordiality of the welcomes given him gradually warmed into life the seed which had been sown in his heart, and there sprang up and bourgeoned something which was closely akin to affection.

And what was the corresponding effect that Chenowith's calls had on the fair protean detective?

In proportion as she gained in strength she resumed her old assertiveness; and Chenowith seemed to think that she grew less complaisant. Thus far he had made no avowal of love to her, and the tender theme had not been broached between them. She had fenced most consummately against any introduction of it; nor had he made any effort at such introduction, perhaps feeling that it would be taking undue advantage of her weakness to do so.

But, now that she was becoming her olden self again, he felt strong promptings to make a reconnoissance into the region

of her affections, for the purpose of ascertaining what might be there held in reserve for him.

While out driving with her one sunny afternoon (the first exercise she had yet taken), after a brief pause in the conversation, Chenowith said:

"Miss Thorndike, I would that the Inquisition were in force to-day."

"A strange yearning, truly!" she replied. "And pray, for what earthly reason would you desire to have the horrors of that institution revived?"

"For the reason that I should like to apply the torture to your heart in order to wrest a confession of its secrets."

"Do you despair of obtaining them by any milder process?"

"Almost."

"But have you made an earnest effort to do so?"

"Not a very earnest one; but somehow I feel as if I should like to force such a confession rather than plead for it."

"Why, what a savage nature you have, to be sure! How grateful ought I to be that the Inquisition is forever dead! But, for the nonce, let us suppose it to be again set up, and that you could apply the rack as chief inquisitor: what would you do in case my heart withstood the torture?"

"I should make it so terrible that there could be no withstanding it."

"What a monstrous thought! But you know that in the old days those broken on the wheel would sometimes make false or confused confessions, to escape the pain for the moment—confessions to be used against them afterward, and to be recanted in renewed inquisitorial torments. Beware now, and ever, my friend, of making the mistake into which too many men fall, of seeking to extort acknowledgments of the condition of a woman's heart before she is prepared to make them."

"I heed the warning, Miss Thorndike, and will proceed in another manner. I will begin by informing you of the condition of my own heart, which may or may not be of import to you. That heart, which once breathed only repugnance for you, has learned to love you."

There was a slight flush on her cheek, and after a moment of hesitation, she answered in a hearty tone:

"Well, that is frank, to say the least. There is no terror in an expression like that."

"And nothing offensive?"

"Nothing offensive."

"You say my utterance is frank. May I ask for an equally frank one in response? Do you return my love?"

"I don't know."

"Is that thoroughly frank?"

"Thoroughly. I never gave utterance to a franker expression. So you see that were the rack to be applied to my heart, it would be found in the condition of many a poor martyr in times of persecution, who could not tell whether he believed or disbelieved, and suffered in extremis the penalty of his very indeterminateness."

"But," resumed Chenoweth, "if my declaration is, as you say, not offensive to you, I may at least assume that you do not dislike me as you once did?"

"Of that," she replied with unconcealed earnestness, "you may be as certain as of the pulsing of the blood within your veins."

"Well, that is progress. Now I notify you that I shall follow up my advantage, and lay determined siege to your heart, until I finally batter down its gates and effect an entrance."

"But don't you adopt poor military policy in thus announcing your plans in advance? Will not the very declaration naturally produce a stronger resistance on the part of the besieged?"

"Possibly. But the pleasure of the siege will be the keener and the glory of the victory the greater."

"Should the victory, however, be on the other side?"

"Then I should bear with me the memory of a great and determined struggle for a lofty end."

"A lofty end! I ought surely to thank you for the noble encomium involved in that expression, even though I may not be able to contribute to your attainment of such end."

And this practically ended the interview.

From the moment when Reginald Chenowith discovered himself to be interested in Grace Thorndike, he intermitted his attentions to Maud Mellington. He did not, in legal wise, serve notice on her of his intention in the premises, but availed himself of his reserved rights under the original compact.

This flirtation had been an education for Chenowith. It had, as it were, raised a window looking into a section of the social world hitherto comparatively unexplored by him, and had afforded him such opportunities of studying movements and criticising motives as might not have been presented to him in the usual course of female acquaintanceship for years.

Quick of discernment, and keen of penetration, while observing the traits of character of the woman with whom he was so intimately associating, he made a close study of the peculiarities of her class,

which he found to be much larger in number than he had dreamed, leaving, however, he was impelled to admit, the overwhelming preponderance of numbers on the side of those true women who look with utter repugnance upon anything savoring in the least of trifling with the sacred affections of the heart.

Whatever, therefore, may have been the ethical judgment proper to be passed upon him for his own course during his period of coquetry, it had certainly proved a great enlargement of his knowledge of human nature, and a by no means depreciatory modification of his estimate of woman-kind. It was a school for him in which he received a finished course of instruction within a proportionately brief period of pupilage.

To say, however, that Chenoweth emerged from this school without bearing with him a burden of remorse, would be an inexcusable concealment of a pertinent truth. He felt cheapened in his own estimation, and was penitent to the deepest depths of his spirit. But his strong self-respect soon came to his aid; and the recuperative power of his inherent manhood enabled him to reassert himself, and to look again in the face the world against whose current ethics he had not committed an unpardonable offense.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VOODOO INVOKED IN AID OF LOVE'S
QUEST.

After a restless night passed by Maud Mellington (something exceptional on her part, for she usually took the world easy and consequently slept soundly) the brilliant though superficial blonde awoke one fine morning to a realization of the disquieting truth that the flirtation in which she had for many merry months indulged with Reginald Chenowith, had resulted in involving her heart in a serious entanglement.

The main factor contributing to this discovery was the development of the fact that Maud's ad interim attendant and masquerade suitor had been manifesting of late a marked inclination toward Grace Thorndike.

There was an interesting mixture of jealousy, chagrin, and genuine affection in Maud Mellington's sensations on this occasion, to analyze which would constitute a task for an adroit metaphysician. As the reader must have inferred, although Maud was undeniably sparkling and witty

in conversation, she was seriously lacking in depth of thought, and therefore her resources for withstanding a disaster of affection of this character were sadly inadequate. In consequence, her equanimity was utterly overthrown, and she was in the throes of as great a heart-sorrow as could come to so shallow a nature as hers.

After exhausting her first natural resort—tears—Maud gave way to an access of indignation, first toward Chenowith, and next toward Grace Thorndike. And it must be admitted, as will appear from an episode it is our unpleasant duty to relate, that she exhibited, in her heart's dire emergency, far less discretion than one would have given her credit for from an acquaintance with her bearing in society. But who shall fix limits to the infatuation attendant on a disappointed love?

The morning sunlight entered unabashed, a few mornings afterward, into the chamber where Maud lay sleeping, and dwelt undeterred on her sensuous loveliness; and this intruder of light was not long after joined by one of darkness, in the person of Aunt Keziah, a coal-black, hard-featured, repulsive-looking negress, who, although not belonging to the house-

hold, had gained entrance as only darkies, and especially darky "aunties," have a faculty of doing, and who had no scruples in wakening Maud from a sound sleep, and broaching conversation with the abrupt remark:

"Miss Maud, yo' done gone back on me las' night."

Maud slowly opened her eyes to a consciousness of the presence of the ogress, and responded:

"Aunt Keziah, it was too dark and rainy; I could not venture out in such a night."

"Voodoo doan' done hab no truck wid cowahds," answered old Keziah in a stern voice.

"Well," said Maud in a deprecatory tone, "I own that I was a coward last night; but the weather will probably not be so bad to-night."

"Dunno 'bout dat—I'se nuffin' ter do wid de weddah: eb'ry kind am de same ter Voodoo," responded the negress. "Ef yo' am gwine ter play pickerninny lak' dat, bes' luf hit erlone altergedder."

"Well, I'll try it to-night, rain or shine," said Maud, plucking up fresh resolution.

"All right, Miss Maud," returned the negress with apparent nonchalance; "but Voodoo doan' done ask nobody ter come ter de wo'ship. Yo' takes yo' own co'se;

an' b'ar in min', chile,' dat yo' cain't git wot Voodoo hain't got ter gib."

And with this sententious utterance, the old creature took her departure with as much dignity as could have been assumed by an ecclesiastical prelate.

Aunt Keziah was a Voodoo priestess from the Louisiana swamps. At present she was on a sort of missionary visit to the upper country, and was driving a brisk business among her own class, and occasionally among the whites—and of the latter, as Maud Mellington furnished humiliating evidence, not exclusively among the "po' white trash," for she was not the only member of "de quality" whom Aunt Keziah numbered in the list of her patrons. Her business consisted, of course, in selling Voodoo charms, spells, and release-ments from supposed witcheries, her subjects being both humans and beasts.

The specific object of Maud Mellington's contemplated visit to the Voodoo altar was to procure a charm or spell whereby Reginald Chenowith might be freed from his infatuation for Grace Thorndike. As strange as it may at first seem that a lady of intelligence and refinement should come under such influences, one has but to ob-

serve the many instances of kindred delusion occurring in our day (only under more palatable titles), in all ranks of society, to have evidence that the case of the brilliant blonde was by no means an isolated one.

Soon after the shades of night had closed in, Maud Mellington, her identity effectually disguised by a mantle and hood, made her way to a negro cabin in the outskirts of the city, where she found a number of women, muffled like herself, awaiting the incantations of Aunt Keziah. The rites of the weird worship amounted to little or nothing, consisting rather of services or ceremonies performed by the candidates themselves, than of performances by the priestess or her assistant, a youngerly and sharp-looking mulatto woman.

Maud waited until all the other of Aunt Keziah's patrons had been assigned their several penances, been invested with the desired spells or charms for themselves or their human or brute friends, paid their money and departed; and then presented herself for the ordeal she was to undergo; it being one of Aunt Keziah's rules never to reveal beforehand to the subject of her sorcery the nature of such ordeal.

"Chile ob mo'tality," said the priestess, "de fus' ting yo' hez ter do dis night am ter trow off all yo' clo's an' put on dis yeah

gyahment in deir place [handing her a sort of Mother Hubbard gown], and arter dat ter walk tree times roun' dis yeah cabin, bar'-foot, sayin' all de time, "Voodoo! Voodoo! an' sayin' nuffin' else, an' tinkin' nuffin' else."

The proud beauty submitted unobtrusively, with the assistance in disrobing of Aunt Keziah's acolyte, to the humiliating demonstration prescribed; and when she re-entered the cabin, the priestess said with great solemnity:

"Chile ob mo'tality, yo' am de favo'd one ob de Voodoo. De hea't ob de proud woman am ter be brung down; de man wot hab gone back on yo' shall bow down at yo' feet."

When Maud came to re-enrobe herself, the assistant was gone, and she had to accept the assistance of Aunt Keziah. She had slipped a sizable gold-piece into the old woman's hand, and was indulging in a pleasing dream of self-gratulation, when, in completing the process of dressing, she missed a costly brooch which she had accepted as a birthday present from Chenoweth (the only souvenir of any kind she had ever received from him), and which she had been so inconsiderate as to wear on this occasion. Thinking that it had become detached from her dress in the process of disrobing, she spoke to Aunt Ke-

ziah about it, and though the two made careful search for it, it could not be found.

Maud was overwhelmed with confusion and annoyance. The superstition which prompted her to seek the enchantments of the Voodoo altar now proved a plague to her, for, according to popular belief, the loss of a birthday gift was a bad omen, serious in proportion to its value; and her over-wrought sensibilities pictured the loss of Chenowith's present under the peculiar circumstances as most disastrous in its consequences.

She spoke somewhat harshly to Aunt Keziah about the matter, but the old har-ridan was imperturbable, and simply said:

"Wha' fo' yo' done w'ar er ting lak' dat 'mongst er passel ob po' niggahs?"

This pertinent interrogatory was all the satisfaction that Maud could obtain, and she was now convinced that the brooch had either been made away with by old Keziah's assistant during the triple circumvolution of the cabin, or pilfered by the priestess herself while assisting in dressing her patroness. At length she was obliged to make her way homeward in a disillusioned, humiliated, and utterly disgusted state of mind.

The loss of the treasured trinket wrought so deeply upon Maud's mind that she was moved to consult the detectives

of the police department in regard to it. It was not the value of the brooch that affected her, but the double fear—that of Chenowith's learning of the loss, and the superstitious dread of the effect of the circumstance as an omen of disaster to her affection. The application to the detectives eventuated in nothing; for Aunt Keziah knew very well that Maud would not permit her to be arrested, on account of the exposure that would follow. Nor was she to be caught by the bait of a reward for the production of the valued article. If, as was exceedingly probable, the old woman had herself purloined the brooch, she was not going to admit the fact either to the detectives or to Maud herself, but was holding on to the article for the purpose of making a more profitable and safer speculation out of it through the instrumentality of third parties in the future.

The result was that, between mortification and chagrin over the disappearance of her so highly prized keepsake and fear of such disappearance and the occasion thereof becoming known, together with her grief over the defection of Chenowith, the disappointed, disheartened, and rebuffed blonde was in a condition of mind bordering on desperation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WATERLOO BETWEEN WOMEN.

After the lapse of some days, Maud Mellington made another essay in the direction of breaking the attachment of Chenowith for Grace Thorndike.

It is rare that two women confer together on matters concerning the affections—at least where the same man is concerned—without something being held back by one of them. But in the interview we are about to describe, there was as clean an exchange of sentiments and as thoroughly unequivocal an expression of reciprocal feeling as has ever occurred between two females.

Reginald Chenowith, in one of his moments of confidence with Maud Mellington, had done a thing which men will continue to do while there are women in the world—a thing which he had had more than one occasion to regret, but which had thus far been attended with no embarrassing results for him. This was to inform Maud, in one of his moods of antipathy to Miss Thorndike, of her occupation as Govern-

ment detective. It will be seen how the attractive blonde kept the promise made to Chenowith to preserve inviolate the secret confided to her.

"Grace Thorndike," said Maud one day, at the residence of the former, after a very few prefatory remarks, "we are now face to face; and as one woman, fully of age, knowing something of the world, and presumed to have put away all girlish nonsense, may talk to another in the same situation, so I intend to talk to you, very plainly."

"The plainer the better," interposed Grace.

"Perhaps you may not think so when I get fairly into the subject," returned Maud. "Now, to come directly to the point. You have apparently won Reginald Chenowith's heart from me."

"Won his heart from you, Maud? Why, I thought it was a distinct understanding between you two that it was only a flirtation you were engaged in. You have yourself so given it out, on repeated occasions."

"Well, no matter about that, Grace. It isn't the first time that a flirtation has led to a heart-entanglement."

"No, indeed, Maud. Then you really love Mr. Chenowith, do you, and you are positively capable of love?"

"This is no occasion for sarcasm, Grace. It is one that calls for earnestness and sincerity."

"Earnestness and sincerity as preached by Maud Mellington! 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!'"

"How *can* a woman be so hateful?" exclaimed Maud, stamping her pretty little foot with masculine energy, though her fury was purely feminine.

"Oh, there are infinite phases to a woman's capacity in this regard, dear Maud," calmly answered Grace. "If men only knew us as we know one another, we should less often hear them talk of us as angels. But, Maud, I sincerely beg your forgiveness. We were going to play that we were men, and here we are playing women to perfection! Now let us talk like men."

"Well, then, listen to reason!" resumed Maud, petulantly. "Now, to begin where I left off when so ungraciously interrupted by you: I don't believe your conquest of Reginald Chenowith's heart is a permanent one; nor do I believe that you would want to hold his affection long, if you could; for I feel confident that the person you really love is Geoffrey Bannister."

"You should by all means set yourself

up as a heart-reader, Maud. Your claims are no more heavily burdened with modesty than those of the professional mind-readers."

"You do not deny my assumption," persisted Maud, now thoroughly warmed up with her theme; "so I shall take it for granted. Now, I am not going to make any appeal to your magnanimity, or to your womanly sentiment or feeling; for I don't think it would do the least good."

"Thank you!" interjected Grace with a smile.

"I mean what I say," pursued Maud. "We are now throwing sentiment to the winds. I am about to address your interest, and that alone. If we were men, I should say that I am going to talk business."

"Well, let us play that we *are* men," said Grace with another smile.

"You'll find that it's something else than play!" retorted Maud in her heat. "To come again to the point, Grace Thorndike, it so happens that it has come to my knowledge that you have for a number of years been acting in the capacity of a Government detective among the Moonshiners. I hardly need say that it would be very disagreeable to you to have this fact generally known."

"Yes, it would be exceedingly disagree-

able," replied Grace, who had slightly started when Maud broached the matter.

"Ah! Then I was correct in my hypothesis," resumed Maud, with an irrepressible chuckle. "And now I have a clear business proposition to make to you. In case you will give up Reginald Chenowith and discourage his attentions to you (as it is your womanly duty to do), I will keep inviolate the secret I hold concerning your occupation. But if you are determined to persist in your present course, I shall make the matter public, and it scarcely admits of a doubt that the result will be the loss of your social position."

While Maud was uttering this menace, a crimson color had suffused the face of the listener, who had hitherto continued unmoved during the conversation; and having remained practically silent thus far, she now, in a firm voice, and with curled lips, said:

"Maud Mellington, you have had your say. You have stipulated the price of keeping your lips sealed. You have levied your blackmail upon me: Now it remains to be seen if you will be able to collect it."

"Blackmail!" exclaimed Maud, her eyes flashing fire; "how dare you?"

"I let you have your speech out; now you must let me have mine out. I said black-

mail for the reason that I meant it, and I take the cue you have yourself given, of speaking plainly. Nor need you dart lightnings at me from your eyes so early in the game, for I have something yet to say that will bring sharper darts still.

"I have told you that I should very much dislike to have the fact of my connection with the Government become known; but if I am to buy secrecy at any price, especially from you, I scorn the purchase, and prefer, a dozen times over, the fullest exposure.

"As to my relations with the pseudo-lover who has discarded you, I utterly refuse to make them the theme of discussion.

"So you can go on and make your exposure; publish my heinous offense on the housetops; have it blown in trumpets on the streets; and, most potent instrument of all, set your nimble tongue in motion and whisper it into every ear within your social purview. I lay no embargo upon your means or vehicles of publishing my disgrace; nor do I crave your leniency in the slightest degree."

"You are very brave, Grace Thorndike," responded Maud. "If one might be so foolish as to believe you sincere, you would furnish an entertaining spectacle of a Spartan damsel."

"Meantime, Maud Mellington," pursued

Grace, with unruffled composure, "(and this is no threat, and no proposal for a truce, which I should loathe to make with a creature so lost to honor as yourself) —meantime, I will merely remark that as I have received certain information concerning your own pursuits, under no pledge to keep it secret, and as the police are making up a record of the patrons of the old Voodoo hag and thief, it will be entirely legitimate, in my capacity as detective, to place your name on the list, together with the exceedingly interesting circumstances under which you lost the diamond brooch which Mr. Chenowith gave you on your birthday. This would constitute almost as delectable a theme for society comment as would the exposure of my detective operations."

To say that Maud Mellington collapsed under the broadside discharged from this masked battery would be very meagerly to describe the situation. She began a reply with—

"Would you dare—?"

But choked in the utterance.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't begin to dare, Maud! I'm a natural coward—this everybody knows. I merely suggested the legitimacy of my making such a move."

Maud Mellington had marched to the attack in this battle as confidently as did

Napoleon at Waterloo; and in the first onset, like the hero of a hundred battles, had made good headway; but Grace Thorndike had maintained a firm front like Wellington, and, with her Blücher reinforcement in the shape of the Voodoo incident, had completely routed her enemy, who had found a sunken road of Ohain suddenly yawning before her and precipitating her catastrophe.

History does not relate whether or not Napoleon, in his utter and disastrous overthrow, wept, but the chronicle of this equally calamitous defeat does distinctly aver that the vanquished contestant, despite her persistent effort at self-restraint, gave way to an ultra-feminine flood of tears.

Rising at length to go, Maud said, in a subdued tone:

"Well, Grace, I presume it is henceforth to be war between us."

"Not necessarily, Maud," was the reply in a kindly tone. "I have not sought war. I did not open hostilities."

"Suppose, then," said Maud, "that we agree to drop matters where they are, and let secrets remain secrets."

"All right, Maud: I'm content."

And the quondam fiery blonde left for home in very much the same spirit in

which the ruined Corsican, after the dread day of Quatre Bras, made his solitary way in the shadows of night across the ripening grainfields of Belgium toward the French border.

CHAPTER XIX.

A UNIQUE ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER.

Reginald Chenowith would have been very obtuse indeed, had he remained for any length of time ignorant of the attentions of the Rev. Mr. Bannister to Miss Thorndike. Not only did the current gossip thereanent reach his ears, but, in passing to and fro in his calls upon her, as well as in her own house, he met the fine-looking rector, and encountered his cheery smile, with a frequency not especially edifying to one in any degree inclined to jealousy. But we are disposed to absolve Chenowith from the sin of harboring any such feeling.

However, it was not in human nature for a pronounced suitor, as Chenowith now was, to suppress very long all reference to the matter of rivalry which thus obtruded itself upon his observation. One evening he felt himself justified in thus broaching the topic:

"Miss Grace, I have thus far refrained from mentioning or alluding in any manner to the attentions paid you by Mr. Bannister, and should not touch upon the sub-

ject now did I think it might be an unwelcome one to you."

"It would not only not be unwelcome," she answered, with great ingenuousness of manner, "but I shall be glad to talk with you upon that topic, which I should myself have introduced before long, had you not forestalled me."

"I cannot disregard the fact that he is my rival in the quest of your affection, and I take pleasure in acknowledging the further fact that he is a most courteous and unobtrusive one," resumed Chenowith.

"I might have assumed," replied Grace, "that you would not withhold from him the qualities of a genial gentleman; but I should be glad to have from you a close estimate of his character."

"That I will give you very cheerfully," was the response. "His is a most exceptional personality. His intellectual qualities have too strongly impressed themselves on the community to need any commendation by me; but the fine texture of his esthetic nature, his keen discrimination in ethical matters coming within his purview, clearly avoiding all cant, together with the genuine ring of the social side of his character, render him a man to be studied, admired, and loved by all who can appreciate so signal and pure a type of sterling manhood."

"It is most gratifying to know," she said, "that you place so exalted an estimate on his merits; indeed, you have elicited my gratitude for the just and generous words you have spoken of him. He has been the gentle Mentor of an important section of my existence, and I owe to his influence more than words can express, or a lifetime repay."

There was a vibrating earnestness in her tones which thrilled Chenoweth with admiration; while it must be admitted that they strained to its utmost tension his sentiment of magnanimity toward his rival. If such were the feelings she entertained for the rector, he could not refrain from asking himself, what was the nature of his own tenure of her regard?

But no murmur escaped the lips of the generous-hearted lover, and he contented himself with saying:

"Happy in a rare degree, Miss Grace, must be the man who has such a hold at the same time on your esteem and on your sympathy."

"I have spoken in strong terms in this matter," she resumed, "because I cannot afford nor endure to be misunderstood. And now, may I ask you to bear with me while I define, at some length, my relative position with regard to Mr. Bannister and yourself?"

"Could I listen to anything that would interest me more deeply?" he asked in response.

"And you are sure you will not get weary or impatient?" she urged. "For if I am fully and clearly to explain my sentiments and feelings, I must not be hurried. Besides, I may say things which will try your graciousness to me." "

"Miss Grace," he said with an earnestness which she could not mistake, "my ear and heart await your utterance, now as never before."

"Well, to begin with Mr. Bannister. He is my ideal of a moral hero. I have tried to love him, but he is above and beyond me. Had I been differently situated in life I might have lived toward his standards, though perhaps never up to them—might have lived into his life, and been a companion to him. But, in view of the existence to which I have been accustomed, I have been too thoroughly secularized to become a proper helpmate for him in his great life-work. He has never asked me to become his wife—has never even told me that he loves me; but I assume that he will ere long do both; for I can read his heart as if it were an open book."

"I feel as confident as do you of his intentions," interposed Chenoweth.

"I invariably feel small in his presence,"

she continued, "and my habits of thought and action cannot be so changed as to bring me up to his measure. I once thought it would be an indescribable joy to reach up and cling to him, and grow into his spirit and aims; but it could not be, and it cannot be."

"With all due deference to your self-depreciatory view, Miss Grace," said Chenoweth, "and at the risk of prejudicing my own case, I must with the utmost sincerity declare that I can see nothing in the circumstances of your life to militate against your becoming the wife of Geoffrey Bannister."

"I thank you," she replied, "for the implied commendation; but I know my own nature too well to permit any one besides myself to be the arbiter in such an issue as this."

"And now," she continued, "having said what I have of Mr. Bannister, let me particularize as to yourself; and in what I have to say in this connection, I beg that you will draw neither encouragement nor discouragement as a suitor, but consider me as speaking from the cool, unimpassioned point of view of a disinterested critic.

"To begin with: You are more nearly on an ethical level with me than Mr. Bannister. I have not that species of awe of

you which moral superiority inspires. You have fought your way into my life and conquered me on my own ground, making a prisoner of my inclinations in my own castle. You have forced me to respect you, and made yourself companionable to me, whereas you were previously odious. You have accomplished in my case that which to every woman of sense and discrimination is inexpressibly satisfying: you have made a successful study of my nature. Once you utterly misunderstood me: now you thoroughly understand me. Once you were afraid of me: now you have not the least fear of me—not even that gentle fear which is said, and I think rightly, to be the basis of the chivalry of our Southern gentlemen. The absence of this delicate awe, which in you I do not in any wise regret, has the effect of making you seem to me as my equal—as my fellow, if you will allow the expression.

“If it were not for you I think I should have made the mistake (assuming, of course, that he had asked me) of marrying Mr. Bannister. Not that I could ever be seriously unhappy with him; but I should be a drag upon him. Now, I can see your faults, and it is through them that I can see you—your more vital self. There is one thing I especially like about you—it is the indomitable self-assertion

of your nature—that superb self-assertion which leads you to make a clean, square fight with the world, asking no quarter, and determined at all hazards to win.”

She paused. He had listened with intense interest. While her comparison of himself with Bannister in a moral point of view had made him wince for the nonce, he was by no means displeased with her analysis of him as a whole.

“You have hit upon one word, Miss Grace, which most nearly expresses my feeling for you. It is that word ‘fellow.’ While I regard you as mentally superior to any woman I have yet met, and while I am your declared lover, I recognize no such ineffable reverence as true love is generally presumed to inspire. Repudiating, as I do, the old common-law idea of the inferiority of woman, I yet reject the idea of the spiritual superiority of your sex; and the indefinite glamour of moral pre-eminence traditionally prevalent with respect to that gentler portion of humanity, has never constituted an essential and enduring charm in my eyes. This may be heresy; but I think I can more truly honor your sex by appreciating them at their real worth as equals, than by transforming them into angels.”

“While enthusiastic champions of our sex may challenge your views in this re-

gard," she replied, "I certainly have no inclination to do so.

"And now," she continued, "we comprehend each other thoroughly. I am not a saint, and you are not a demigod. We are both human, made of like clay with the average of mortals. And should there be any possibility of our linking our fortunes together, there would be no process of disenchantment to be gone through with."

"No, indeed."

CHAPTER XX.

SELF-TOLD TRUTHS.—EXTRACTS FROM GRACE
THORNDIKE'S JOURNAL.

September 10.—The days pass on, and the time approaches when I shall have to make a decision between my two suitors. And the more closely the issue is narrowed between them, the more difficult of solution grows the problem before me.

What a rare specimen of manhood is Mr. Bannister! How like Saul among the prophets does he stand forth among all his associates! What an incense of gentleness arises from his every word and act!

Was there ever such a combination of the lofty-souled, devoted, self-sacrificing servant of God, and the thoroughly accomplished gentleman, careful of even the smaller amenities of life, and apparently skilled in all the accomplishments that render a man capable of making his way through the world with success? What a superb rider is he! What a store he sets by his horse and his dog! He is known as the most stalwart pedestrian in the entire vicinity. And yet there is ever enveloping him a moral atmosphere that places and

holds him above me. There is no lack of geniality in his conversation with me, and he makes me at ease in his presence; but when he is gone, the problem ever recurs to me: if this man, favoring me with his marked attention, shall ask me the question of questions, what shall I answer?

Do I love him? *Could* I love him?

And here comes in this new factor in my experience—this man Chenowith.

Strange, strange, strange, that his attitude to me, and mine to him, should have been so reversed! But his brave soul challenged mine in that exciting episode on the sands of Tybee. How he stood forth beyond all other men in that rescuing scene! He broke, at that moment, the backbone of my resentment toward him; and he has been growing upon me ever since.

Ah, the attorney threatens the clergyman! The hold of the latter would have been strong upon me—enhancingly strong—but for the persistency of the former. Since he held me in his arms in the cabin of the Moonshiners, with his blood, shed in my defense, mingling with mine, he has had a hold on my heart which I cannot shake off.

September 13.—Can the heart have a divided allegiance? Once I accepted the traditional ethics of this question, but I

am becoming heterodox with regard to it. If I do not love Mr. Bannister, I cherish such sentiments toward him as, were I a man, I should not like to have the woman I loved cherish toward any other man. Yet, holding those sentiments as I do, and must, whatever betide, my heart has been besieged, and almost forced to capitulate, by this new-comer, untiring, defiant, indomitable, enticing in his persistency, and enchanting in his imperiousness.

The miracle of the situation lies in the fact that in proportion as my regard for the lawyer increases, my veneration and esteem for the rector seem to be enhanced. As my moral hero, my Sir Galahad, there he stands, great and strong, "because his heart is pure," inspiring the deepest reverence of my being. Shall I say this is reverence only, and not love? Ah, could I say it truly, my heart-problem would be solved. Were there no Chenowith in the case, I should not hesitate to call my feeling for the rector love.

But I weary of the equation which grows in complexity with my efforts at its solution.

Let me sleep upon it.

September 15.—Mr. Chenowith called this evening. He was more imperious than ever. He no longer supplicates my

love: he demands it. Was there ever a man with so much sublime assurance?

A singular bundle of contradictions is he, to be sure—a provoking yet entertaining metaphysical antithesis. When I first began to meet him he seemed to me to be a fair type of what I deemed to be the crass cultivation of many Northern men. He presented such a contrast to our Southern gentlemen, and especially to Mr. Banister! But somehow, as I became better acquainted with him, his lack of outward cultivation seemed to disappear with the development of an inner culture which was something more than cultivation. Now, as I study him more thoroughly, his idiosyncrasy takes the shape of a fine scorn of exterior accomplishments (although he is by no means wanting therein) and an inspiring pride in the predominant culture of the inner and higher nature.

But I am constrained to admit, also, that as a society man Mr. Chenoweth wears better than the average of the gentlemen with whom I have associated since I first appeared in social life. He rarely speaks of himself; he avoids the too prevalent use of a slangy style in his conversation; he does not weary one by catching up the latest phrases of the day, even though they be not slang, and larding his talk with them; he does not thresh over old straw,

dwelling on worn-out themes, and rehashing old ideas and notions and conceits; nor does he disgust sensible-minded persons by the broaching of crude and ill-digested theories, or new-fangled fads or fancies, the spawn of abnormal speculation.

Sept. 17.—The rector and the attorney were both here this evening, and I had a good opportunity to contrast them. Each is one in a thousand. I drew them out in conversation with each other, holding myself in the background. I noted that Chenowith was more deferential to Bannister than I have ever known him to be to any other gentleman, and I saw at once that the rector clearly recognized the logical mind and strong, healthy views of his rival. How discriminating, gentle, and gentlemanly that rival can be when he chooses!

The rector left first. When he was gone, Mr. Chenowith indulged for a season in his old presumptuousness. But I am bound to say that he was not less interesting than during his previous dialogue with Mr. Bannister.

When he is in these moods, he bears down upon me like a locomotive, and gives me little chance to get in a word edgewise, until he has had his full say. Then perhaps he will remain silent and force me to talk until I have talked myself out.

And he is such a superb listener when he does listen!

At such times he is tentative in his utterances, and studiously and carefully deferential; and this, too, when we are by ourselves, rendering such attitude more certainly sincere, and investing our conversation with more interest and zest.

Indeed, not only does he himself put forth constantly fresh thoughts, but he inspires them in and draws them from me.

Take him all in all, I think I should like him less were he anything other than he is.

Sept. 20.—A delightful call from the rector. He has never been more entertaining.

The more closely gathers the shadow of the hour when I shall have to render a decisive answer to this man of men, the more he seems to grow upon me. At times I feel as if it would be the supremest happiness for me to enter his life and seek to live up to his level, and assist in carrying out his high aims. There is surely a great destiny before him, and he can not fail to make his mark on his day and generation.

But following this aspiration comes the reaction, when I feel myself so wedded to the habitudes, the short-comings, the selfish interests, and the lower ambitions of to-day, that I shrink from all thoughts of realizing the ephemeral idea.

Ah me!

CHAPTER XXI.

A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO A GREAT SOUL.

Since the attack upon him while riding with Grace Thorndike, and his recovery under the attentive care of Aunt Phebe, Mr. Bannister had felt himself drawn closer to the companion of his peril; and he began meditating on the advisability of a declaration of the affection which was now fully developed in his heart. Heaven never smiled on a more single-minded man than he, and his heart was worn on his sleeve. He loved as he lived, as he thought, as he acted, and as he preached—in the fear of God, in the spirit of a sterling manhood, in the light of a clarified reason, and with an honest, earnest purpose. And the declaration of his love was in keeping with the whole tenor of his existence. It was not made in the heat of passion, with surroundings tending to make a scene of its demonstration, but was reduced to paper, in a shape that he should not be ashamed of in the days to come, whatever might be the issue of his suit.

The following was his letter of declaration:

My Gentle Friend:

Although aware that the relation of pastor and parishioner is liable to mislead me into misinterpreting the kindly expressions of respect for my position to be those of regard for myself, yet I have sought carefully to discriminate in this matter, and it seems to me that I have discerned something beyond the regard I have indicated.

But whether in error or not in this sweet fancy, I have resolved to lay my heart open before you by the confession that I love you. I do not seek to magnify nor exaggerate my affection. It is the same old story: I love as men have loved of old, and as they will continue to love "while grasses grow and waters flow."

And, loving you with an honest and true love, I come to you, asking that I may graft upon my future existence the ineffably treasured influence that your words and ways have exerted on me during the sunlit seasons of our acquaintanceship.

Now, my dear friend, while my plea is not as glowing a one as might be made, it is, I trust, sufficient to express the sincerity of my conviction and the honesty of my purpose.

I shall await your response with the assurance that it will in any event be such a

frank one as corresponds with your open nature and generous emotions.

With fervent regard, your friend,
GEOFFREY BANNISTER.

This proposal of Bannister's was unexpected to Grace Thorndike only in the form in which it was conveyed. She had for some time anticipated it, but had presumed that it would be made orally, which would give her an opportunity to say to him what was in her mind and heart to say, and what she somehow shrank from committing to paper. She had wanted to have a good long talk with him, and to give expression therein to some of the things she had said to Chenowith. She had wanted to tell him how near she had come to loving him, and yet what impassable barriers there were to her becoming his wife.

She did not think he had been made aware of the relation she sustained to the Government, and she desired to be the first to communicate it to him. She had the confidence to believe that she could make him see how utterly incongruous it would be for a clergyman of his standing to have as a wife a professional criminal detective, one who had lived the life of secret adventure which had been hers since she had held that position—for certain it was that

sooner or later this chapter in her career must become known to the community.

And all this she thought she could tell him as a friend, as a sister, so kindly and gently as not to lose his respect and friendship, which she was intensely anxious to retain.

But his letter, depriving her, as it did, of this coveted opportunity, came as a keen disappointment to her. That long, kindly, satisfying talk, which should make a closer friend while disillusioning a lover, could now never be held. She must reply to his proposal in the form in which it had been made, and a hiatus must open in their intercourse, which she could scarcely hope to have again filled.

After a delay of a day or two, during which she pondered these things with saddened earnestness, Grace addressed to Mr. Bannister the following reply, by no means satisfactory to herself:

My Dear Friend:

No woman of any appreciation of true manliness could fail to be deeply moved by your letter. During my association with you I have learned truly to estimate the peculiar qualities which combine to make up a character as marked in strength and elevation as it is redolent in geniality and permeated with gentleness and tenderness.

You say that you are assured that I will be frank in my reply; and in these utterances I am but confirming your confidence.

No pleasure could be greater for me than that of acknowledging the obligation I am under to you for the attentions with which you have honored me, and the innumerable and studious kindnesses shown me, during the hallowed period of our acquaintance.

And surely no pain could be keener to me than that of being impelled to decline the great honor and boon you have offered to confer upon me.

The question may arise with you, why I have so long encouraged your attentions, since they were to result unfavorably to yourself. My reply to this is that there was a time when I thought I should be able to reciprocate the sentiments which those attentions indicated. That I could not do so is attributable, not to any abatement of my regard for you, but to my lack of confidence in my ability to give you such a love as would render happy the years of great effort that lie before you. Your sphere is above and beyond me, and I am fully persuaded, after mature deliberation, that I but do my plain duty in the declination I make of an offer which of itself confers on me infinite honor.

In the ardent wish that your happiness will enhance with the years and with the

volume of usefulness in store for you, I remain,

Forever your friend,
GRACE THORNDIKE.

Although the inditing of this letter was the result of deliberate thought, the posting of it was the most painful act of the writer's life: it was like the issuing of a capital decree on the part of a judge against a member of his own household.

CHAPTER XXII.

AMONG THE MOUNTAIN SOLITUDES.

When Geoffrey Bannister had concluded the perusal of Grace Thorndike's letter, he carefully replaced it in the envelope, went to the stable and mounted his horse, and rode out on a gallop into the country. It was his favorite method of obtaining undisturbed opportunities for reflection. He rode rapidly until he reached the woods; then, taking the least frequented roads, he permitted his horse to walk, and, holding his hat in his hand, gave himself up to his thoughts.

The letter was not entirely a disappointment to him. While he had hoped for a favorable response to his declaration, his hopes had been mingled with fears. Grace had not latterly been as unrestrained as formerly, and he had felt that she was holding something in reserve.

But although partially prepared for the blow, it nevertheless fell upon him with stunning force. He bowed beneath it as the heaviest calamity of his life. In truth, he had had no greater crisis in his career. His essential manhood, shining out so

clearly, was not the product of dearly bought experience, but was built upon an inherited breadth and integrity of nature. He appeared to be equally as well prepared to meet trials of any kind, as if trouble had been his dower from his earliest years. He was one of those few masterful souls who acquire by instinct the lessons which others learn with trial and suffering.

On and through the secluded woodland paths rode the handsome rector, bearing his new burden of sorrow, and endeavoring to realize the full import of his loss.

Could Grace Thorndike, from some place of concealment, have observed the man she had rejected thus riding along through the silent forest, with a pained and saddened countenance, it is possible that she might have been so touched with pity as to withdraw the missive which had caused her own heart pain akin to that he was now enduring.

At length, as the day wore on, the rector turned his horse's head and slowly made his way homeward. And now, could Grace have again caught a glimpse of him, she would have observed a different expression from that his face wore on the outward ride. Was it an inspiration he had caught in the depths of the forest? Was it a communion he had there had with the eternal Source of all true consolation? Whatever

it might have been, his features had lost the look of pain, while they partially retained that of sadness. It was a look of resignation, and something more—one of determination to bear up under the stroke, and to face the world with a manly heart and an unbroken spirit.

But human nature is not divine, although there are times when it rises to divine heights. Geoffrey Bannister realized the "one touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin," when, after two or three days of bearing with fortitude his great disappointment, he was pervaded with an irresistible longing to get away for a season from the wonted scenes of his professional avocation. Therefore, on the first succeeding Monday morning, taking with him, beside the animal he rode, a pack-horse laden with a tent, hunting equipments, and fishing tackle, with a few choice books, he started on an expedition to the mountains, having announced to his congregation that he should be gone a fortnight or longer.

EXTRACTS FROM BANNISTER'S JOURNAL.

Tuesday.—This is the second day that I have been alone in the forest—alone with

the birds and beasts, with my own heart, and with God. I have already had a taste of that peace which I sought in coming hither. I am unwilling to admit that I lacked the firmness to remain and endure my affliction in the noise and bustle of the world; but I deem it not unmanly to commit myself for a season to the kindly care of nature, and commune with her as I was wont to do when a boy.

Wednesday.—I seem to gather strength with every hour of this seclusion. Here, in these solemn shades, one can, after retrospection, take his bearings anew, profit by his past errors, and blaze a pathway for himself along the vista of the future.

This evening I have been reading Göthe's *Faust*, that immortal work, the writing of which was a task bridging sixty years of a great life. There is vast healing strength in the book for me.

Thursday.—I have come many miles from my first camping-spot. I am now beyond any roads, and the only paths discernible are those made by the wild beasts, whom I can hear at night as I lie in my tent. My compass is my only guide beyond these. A mountain stream runs near my camp, and the trout in its bed furnish most of my meals. In my excursions I have the company of two noble associates—my great Dane dog, Canute, and my trusty St.

Bernard, Tell. Canute is the wisest animal of any kind that I have ever known. He is not as handy and expeditious as Tell, but in an emergency I should feel like relying upon him for almost human direction and assistance.

Friday.—I had not before read Auerbach's "Auf der Höhe," and, to-day being somewhat stormy, I have been regaling myself with a perusal of that exquisite work. It has been an inexpressible comfort to me. I make the record, ere I retire to-night at a late hour, that Auerbach unlocks the heart of common humanity with more facility than any other author of Continental Europe whom I have yet read.

Saturday.—What delightful meals my dogs and I are having, and how convenient and comfortable, with the aid of these faithful brutes, I find everything! I was advised to take my faithful negro servant with me, and at first I seriously missed him. But in my early days I learned to cook, as every lad should learn; and I can conscientiously say that with the aid of my good dogs the absence of my loyal old Caesar is compensated. Tell even brings water for me from the neighboring mountain stream, while Canute accompanies him to superintend the job.

This morning I went out foraging in nature's preserves, and brought back a wild

turkey, which I roasted with success, and we three hungry ones will do full justice to it within the next day or two.

This afternoon and evening I devoted to finishing the royal entertainment of "On the Heights." I closed the night with some of Pascal's noble thoughts. What a gift to the sons of men was the advent in the intellectual world of such a soul!

Sunday.—We had service this morning, my great dogs constituting my audience, and favoring me with an attention not often exceeded by humans. I recalled, during the day, some early memories of my scholastic days by taking into the woods with me a small volume of Coleridge's "Table-Talk." A feast of reason! I recollect asking a professor whom I revered above all collegiate men I have ever known, whose was the greatest mind among men of letters; and never shall I forget his answer: "If you mean the greatest as judged by his competent and disinterested peers, and not by posterity educated into a given opinion, I say Samuel Taylor Coleridge." That old professor now sleeps with his ideal; but there is this to say of his estimate, that I have never yet known a man or woman of intelligence and literary discrimination underrate Coleridge. The ring that his writings had for me in my youth vibrates anew whenever I

go back to his rich fountains of thought for refreshment.

This evening I sat in front of my tent and read, by the light of my wax candles, Solomon's prayer of dedication when he had completed the Temple. As many times as I had read this sublime monologue, though I have ever deemed it a unique piece of Hebrew eloquence, I never before so thoroughly felt its noble force and lofty majesty as to-night.

Tuesday.—To-day I clambered to the summit of the mountain, where I shot a large bear, and, with the aid of Canute and Tell, by dividing his carcass between us three, succeeded in getting it to camp, and we shall luxuriate on it during the remainder of our stay here.

I am having exhilarating sport as a hunter. Yesterday I killed a panther which was lurking unpleasantly near my tent. It is now over a week since I have seen a human face, and I am becoming familiar with the denizens of the forest. . . .

—I have not hitherto, save by a mere allusion, made mention, in these pages, of my great disappointment. I have carefully considered it and reflected upon it from every point of view, asking myself, over and over again, whether I have mistaken kindness for affection, or whether I had really enlisted the feelings of a heart

that shrank, from motives of its own, from consummating its incipient inclination. While the latter hypothesis furnishes the only key to unlock the meaning of the letter, yet I have been unable to see any ground to hope for a reversal of the adverse decision. And I here and now resolve never to meditate an attempt to revive the dream which has had such a bitter awakening. This decision will give me peace; it will give me strength. It is in accord with reason; it is in accord with true manhood; it is in accord with common sense.

Thursday.—It is a pleasant habit with me to re-read favorite books, or portions of them. Last evening I devoted to the beauties of *Les Misérables*. Was there ever such a book written before or since? I have never but once seen Jean Valjean's epitaph translated in any of the English versions I have come across, and that was a prose rendering. I ventured on a translation last night, thus:

“He sleeps. Although his destiny was
strange and sore,
He lived. When his sweet angel was his
own no more,
He died. As gently the event came on,

As falls night's curtain when the day is
done."*

Friday.—After a long and wearying tramp in the forest, I refreshed myself this evening with Tegnér's great Swedish epic of "Frithiof's Saga." My St. Bernard servitor, Tell, yielded early to the sleep his fatigue could not resist; but my great Dane dog, recognizing the Scandinavian accents (for I read aloud), though "the Italian of the North" was not his specific native tongue, yet gave me the most rapt attention, looking into my face with an expression almost human, and wagging his tail in keen enjoyment of the tones of his kindred Norsk.

Canute seemed most interested in the "Vikingabalk," or Viking-code. I transfer to my journal my rendering of some of the stanzas of this ringing monologue, which breathes of the stern, stirring, forceful life of those stout sea-warriors, whose blood has in no small degree mingled with that of us Anglo-Saxons:

*Il dort. Quoique le sort fut pour lui bien étrange,
Il vivait. Quand il n'eut plus son ange,
Il mourut. La chose simplement d'elle même arriva,
Comme la nuit se fait lorsque le jour s'en va.

“Tent ye ne’er upon deck; sleep ye ne’er
beneath roof; within doors may an
enemy lie;
On his shield sleepeth viking, with sword
in his hand, and for tent hath the
vaulted blue sky.

“Short the shaft of Thor’s hammer; an ell
is the length of the blade that Frey
holds in his hand:
’Tis enough; if you’ve courage, close in
with your foe, and too short can not
then be your brand.

“When the storm rages wild, hoist the sail
to the top! Titan sport on the billowy
main!
Let her go! Let her go! Craven he who
would yield! Better sink to rise never
again.

.

“Now appeareth a viking-ship yonder . . .
The contest is fierce; ’tis a fight to the
hilt.
Yield thou now but a step, thou art
banned from our ranks: ’tis our law,
and so do as thou wilt.

“When thou ’rt victor, give grace. He’s no
longer a foe who for mercy defenseless
doth plead.

Prayer is Valhalla's child. To the sup-
pliant's cry he's a dastard who giveth
no heed.

.

"To a viking a wound is adornment and
gain, if on brow or on breast the stroke
fall.

Let it bleed: bind it not until evening be
come, if a viking thyself thou wouldst
call."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A VISITOR BECOMES A PRISONER.

A day or two before the time fixed upon by Bannister for his return home, the rector took a longer jaunt than usual, on foot, accompanied by his dogs. He chose a route no part of which he had traversed before, and which led him through a number of trackless ravines. The very wildness of the scenery made it attractive for him, and when he began to think of retracing his steps, the sun was down below the tops of the hills. He had been unusually engrossed in thought during his long walk, which had scarcely in any degree wearied him, and the bracing atmosphere served as a tonic for his strong frame.

Examining his watch, and making a careful calculation, he concluded that he could not reach his camp before late in the night, and resolved to push forward in the direction in which he had been going, thinking it very probable that he might strike some habitations; and if not, he was prepared to bivouac with his dogs beneath the kindly sky and the sheltering trees.

In accordance with this resolution, he

kept his course with a light heart, until twilight came on; and then the moon arose, and afterward the stars came out in such million-hued brilliancy as, it seemed to him, he had never hitherto seen them display. Had he been inclined to fatigue, it would have been forgotten in the sublime beauties the so glorious night unfolded to his appreciation.

He was still following up the ravines, directed by his compass, and the deep silence enveloping him was broken only by the crossing of his path by some wild beast disturbed in his slumber by so unwonted night visitors, and the consequent barking of his dogs.

But at length, as midnight approached, and Bannister was thinking of disposing himself to rest on a bed of leaves, the dogs began that peculiar kind of barking which indicates the proximity of human habitations. Cheered as only a belated wanderer can be by this demonstration of his intelligent companions, he increased his pace, and after a few minutes discerned, yet some distance up the ravine, a dim light, which seemed to be located in the midst of the forest, there being no evidence of any enclosure or cultivation.

When he reached the light, he found that it proceeded from a cabin of peculiar shape, long and narrow, built, as the na-

tives would say, "chuck-up" against the side of the mountain. With every confidence in a hospitable reception, Bannister knocked at the door, which, after some delay, was partially opened, and a rough voice inside called out:

"What's wantin'?"

"Why, good friend," replied Bannister, "what should any man be wanting at this hour but a chance to get a night's lodging?"

"Stranger," returned the voice from within, "thar's er danged lot o' things er feller may be wantin' 'bout this time o' night besides er bunk. Who be yer, an' whar do yer come from?"

This was accompanied by no demonstration toward unfastening the door.

The rector responded:

"My name is Bannister, and I come from where I have been camping-out in the mountains, having lost my way."

There was, after this announcement, a hurried consultation between the man at the door and others inside; and after several minutes' delay, the rough voice again said:

"Look-er-heah, stranger! Ben't yo' that thar preacher Bannerster what got shot last summer down nigh the burg?"

"Yes, I'm the man; but what has that to do with giving me shelter for the night?"

If you don't want to do it, say so, and I'll go my way, for it's a fair night, and I can sleep outside."

Another consultation was held inside, and then Bannister heard a chain clank and a bolt drawn, and he was bidden, in a rather inhospitable tone, to enter.

Seated on benches before a rude hearth, and on either side of a table made of two slabs with the "fa'r" sides placed across a brace of "sawhorses," were something less than a dozen men, with a pack of cards on the table, and a "stack" of money in front of each one of them, indicating to the rector that he had interrupted an interesting game of poker.

"Gentlemen," he said, observing the pack of cards lying undealt on the table, "don't let me disturb your amusement."

"We don't perpose to hev yer do that," replied one of the men at the table; "but hit's durned sing'lar that yer don't giv us a piece er preachin' on the subjeck."

"I have no right to violate the laws of hospitality by so doing," responded Bannister.

Nevertheless, the game did not go on, and the fact that poker-players should suffer such a hiatus in the heart of what was manifestly a heavy game, was evidence that the advent of the midnight caller had connected with it something of exceptional

import. One or two of the gamblers got up from the table and went into another room, and were soon joined by several others, all leaving their "stacks" as when the game was interrupted.

Bannister was somewhat surprised that he was not asked to sit down, and he helped himself to a three-legged stool that stood in a corner, (the only semblance of a chair that he could discern,) while waiting for some intimation as to how he should be disposed of for the night.

Suddenly a door opened which Bannister had not observed, and a new face appeared on the scene. It was that of a man who seemed to be "the boss of the ranch," to use a Western phrase, and who thus addressed the rector:

"Eldah, we mout ez well tell yer that we'uns hez er notion that yo's heah fo' no good."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Bannister.

"I means, ter be plain, that hit looks er mighty sight lak' yo' bein' a spy."

"A spy!" exclaimed Bannister, his face flushed with indignation.

"Yas, that's percisely the wo'd I done used, an' I don't reckon hit's er very different wo'd fo' er larned gent lak' yo'self ter ketch onter the meanin' of."

Uncertain whether he was in a den of

outlawed gamblers or among a gang of Moonshiners, the rector answered:

"I scorn your imputation. I don't know what your business is, nor how I could play the spy upon it. However, I will settle the matter at once. I will not accept of your hospitality, and will go out into the night and seek shelter elsewhere, or nowhere."

"Sof'ly, Eldah—go easy!" said the "boss," with a sardonic smile, and placing his hand on his hip. "Hit mout be that we'uns hez a wo'd ter say ez ter that mat-tah. You-all hez yo' own say down at the burg, an' we'uns hez ouah own say up heah."

"What! You would not attempt to detain me? You dare not commit such an outrage on the rights of a free citizen?"

"We fellahs dares to do er heap o' things, Eldah, which I reckon yo'll find out befo' we gits through with yo'."

If there was one appellation above all others that would in no sense apply to Geoffrey Bannister, it was that of coward. After reflecting a moment, he recognized the futility either of any attempt to escape or of any effort at resistance. Then he said, with firmness and coolness:

"Men, I now see where I am, and in what condition I am in. You know who I am, and I know who you are. I have run into a trap, and you have me at your mercy.

Now go on and do what you will with me!"

He had been standing on his feet since he had risen to depart, and he now faced them like an Indian warrior bidding defiance to the impending tortures of his captors.

The door at which he entered had been barred; and now there were whispered conferences among the Moonshiners, and goings in and out of the room; until at length the "boss" thus addressed Bannister:

"Eldah, we's got yer now, an' we intends ter hold onter yer fur er while, jes' fur luck. Now, hit mout be that yo's er spy, an' then agin hit moutn't. But we-uns hez got er little mattah ter settle with yer outside uv that. Them thar sarmons yo' done preached in the burg wuz hell-an'-a-half fur we-uns, an' set the Gov'ment cops onter us lak' er pack uv danged bloodhounds."

"I did not know that it had quite so thorough an effect," replied the rector; "but I am proud to learn the fact from your lips."

The "boss" responded, while an ominous light gleamed in his sinister eyes:

"Yo' takes it mighty cool, suh! Mebbe befo' we gits through with yer, yo' won't be quite so onconsarned."

"You most certainly can not move me with your threats," said Bannister with

calm defiance; "and it remains to be seen whether you can do so with your acts."

"Danged ef the Eldah hain't got grit, any how!" exclaimed one of the men in the background.

There was one female among the crowd of desperadoes—Big Moll, as she was called. Moll was the cook, and general inside manager. She was asleep in her own room when Bannister arrived, but the sensation he created aroused her, and she made her appearance to take part in the entertainment of the unusual guest.

"Yo's er sweet specermen uv er preacher!" she said. "Won't yer hev er drap uv the creetur ter comfort yer?" offering him a tin cup of whiskey.

"No, I thank you," he replied; "but I should be glad of a cup of water."

"Water? No, suh! No water heah—we-uns don't deal in hit. The Scriptor's dead agin hit. We done 'touch not, taste not, handle not' the unclean thing! Thank the Lo'd, no drap uv that cussed liquid hez chilled my throat these twenty yeahs."

"Say fo'ty, Moll," broke in one of the Moonshiners, who was evidently not one of her admirers.

"Gin us er rest, Moll, an' the eldah a drink," said another of the crowd, "an' mebbe he'll pray yo' outer jail when yo' done goes down thar ter the burg; fo' yo's

ez shu' ter git jugged ez yo' is to go thar."

"Gin him er drink uv the dum'd stuff yo'-self, Bill Spriggins, ef yo' hez any human-nerty," replied the hardened relic of womanhood. "I done lef' mine behind when I com up inter the mountings.

"Look-a-heah, Eldah," she resumed, turning to Bannister; "ef yo' wuz young an' purty lak' I be, I'd done morry yer out uv hand, yo'se so capterwatin'."

Kindred gibes were indulged in by the rest of the crowd at the expense of the rector, who essayed no reply whatever.

There was now another consultation held, in an adjoining room, in which nearly all the crowd participated.

Left alone with his guard and his dogs, Bannister patted his great Dane on the back, while the latter rubbed his nose against his master's legs as if to let him know he was aware that there was trouble on hand.

"Canute, my lad," he said, "be stout of heart, and remember your Norse blood!"

Then he closed his eyes for a brief space, and turned his face upward, and even the guard turned toward him a reverential glance, while the two faithful creatures by his side looked up at him in silent sympathy.

What passed in those solemn moments

between his soul and the Unseen, is not to be entered in human records.

When the Moonshiners re-entered from the consultation, the "boss" said to Bannister:

"Look-er-heah, Eldah! Yo' mout ez well know that we-uns hez sworn some time ago ter do' yo' up."

"I have had pretty convincing evidence of that fact," remarked the rector calmly.

"Yas, but we didn't done hev yer ez close ez we's got yer now," replied the leader with a grim smile. "But now ter business. We's all concluded to gin yer a chance fo' yer life. Thar's no doubt but yo's up ter the doin's uv them thar Gov'ment cops. Now, ef yo'll help us draw these ducks inter er trap, so's we kin do er finishin' job on 'em, we'll let yo' orf. Ef not, yo' don't git out uv these quarters erlive. Consider this matter keerfully, Eldah, an' gin us yo' decision."

"I have no need to consider your base proposition at all," promptly replied Bannister. "I am only mortified to know that any human being should fail to know the folly of making such a proposal to me. I scorn it, and I scorn you for making it!"

These words brought a murmur of anger from the Moonshiners, and several replied:

"All right! We'll do him up, then!"

"Yo' see what the feelin' is agin yo', Eldah," said the "boss."

"Yes, I see it, but I do not fear it," he answered with curled lip.

"'Nuf said," concluded the leading speaker. "Ter-night, suh, yo' kin sleep in er cabin outside, an' ter-morrer we'll attend ter yo' case."

"I suppose you will not let me take my dogs with me," he said.

"O, yas, let 'im have the pups with 'im," assented two or three with a malign chuckle, which did not pass unnoticed by him.

Whatever might be impending, the indomitable spirit of the rector was inexpressibly comforted by the permission to have his dumb companions to keep him company in what now bid fair to be his last night's rest on earth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NEAR GLANCE AT DEATH.

Under close guard, Bannister was conducted to a small cabin about eight feet in width by ten in length, (separated a number of rods from the main one,) and placed in it with his dogs, the door being securely fastened on the outside, and a sentinel stationed before it. There was no window in the cabin—only two small apertures near the roof, for ventilation and the admission of a modicum of light. This cabin was peculiarly situated, its sole door opening on the side facing the mountain, and in such a position that a person entering it could not be seen from the main cabin; and Bannister had noted, as he passed into his designated prison, an indistinct path leading from it to a narrow defile adjacent to the mountain.

There was a bunk in the little cabin, which had the appearance of not having been slept in for a long time. In this bunk Bannister disposed his dogs very comfortably, and they soon fell asleep after the long day's tramp.

But in arranging the bed for the animals

he had thought he heard a metallic sound beneath it; and, after everything was quiet, he moved the bunk without disturbing its occupants, and discovered an iron trap-door, which he raised, and perceived that it opened upon an underground passage. Entering this, and following it up, he found that it led to a chamber excavated in the side of the mountain, in the rear of the main cabin, which chamber contained a still of good proportions, in active operation, with two or three men attending it, by whom he was unperceived; and he was enabled to make his way back in safety to his quarters.

The rector was not slow in discerning that the object of the subterranean passage-way was to afford a safe means of retreat for the Moonshiners in the rear, when attacked in front. The path he had observed leading along the mountain evidently led to some refuge or ambush held in reserve by them in the depths of the forest, or in some cave in the mountain defile.

When Bannister arrived at the resort of the Moonshiners, he had brought with him his rifle, of which, of course, they disarmed him. But had they searched him further for weapons, which they did not do, they would have found in his pockets a revolver of small caliber and a bowie-knife, the latter more especially carried for use in pre-

paring his game for cooking. This knife he now put to good employment in cutting across both ends of one of the two rough slabs constituting the door of his cabin prison, leaving it so that a vigorous thrust would force out this slab-panel, and enable him and his dogs to escape, in case he thought it expedient to make the effort. He had remained at this work somewhat over an hour, and had gotten the slab ready to be burst through, when he heard persons moving stealthily around the little cabin, and also heard a crackling sound as of the piling up of underbrush; and then the horrible suspicion dawned upon him that his captors were about to burn the cabin down over his head! To reduce his suspicion to a conviction, three circumstances contributed very materially: first, that during the last consultation the Moonshiners had held over his case, he had heard the words, "We'se got ter hev a bigger cabin thar, anyway;" second, the peculiar chuckle he had noted when he had asked to take his dogs into his cabin-prison with him; third, the fact that more than one case of this kind of incendiarism had been brought to the doors of the Moonshiners, in their desperate conflicts with the Government detectives.

Mr. Bannister's captors were evidently not intending to fire the cabin immediately,

for they had ceased from their efforts at piling up the combustible material around the smaller cabin, and had probably retired (with the exception of the sentinel) to the main cabin, and resumed their gambling game, interrupted by the rector's arrival.

The prisoner now realized that there was not a moment to lose if he hoped to escape before the cabin should be fired. So he awoke his dogs, and, preparing them for a movement, he made a bold rush for liberty by throwing himself against the loosened slab of the door, which at once yielded; and before the man on guard could recover from his surprise, the agile rector had him fastened in his stout arms, with fingers clutched on the man's throat to prevent his making an outcry. In the bear-like grip in which he was held, the guard was forced to drop his rifle, which Bannister seized, and then, tying the man's hands behind him, forced him to march in front of him and his dogs, "the nearest way," said Bannister under his breath, "to the public highway, if you value your life." The determined manner of the rector convinced his captive that he could not be trifled with, and the man headed the procession in the direction indicated, the dogs bringing up the rear, the great Dane seeming by his dignified tread to recognize the importance of their charge.

Bannister had, of course, little confidence that he would be able to proceed far with his prisoner without being pursued by the aroused Moonshiners; and in case he was overtaken by them, he was resolved to sell his life dearly. He was not mistaken in his apprehensions of pursuit, for before he had been half an hour on his way, he heard the firing of shots, followed soon after by the yells of the disappointed outlaws, thus cheated of their revenge almost in the moment of its consummation. The rector and his prisoner were now in a bridle-path which admitted of more rapid progress; and, untying the hands of the man, the captor forced him to proceed on the double-quick, being thus enabled to hold his pursuers a good chase for nearly an hour longer, the latter gaining but little upon him.

At length, however, it became evident to the rector that his own strength, undermined by the previous day's tramp extending long into the night, and the hurried march now in progress, could not cope with that of the fresh Moonshiners, and he knew that the struggle for life was close at hand.

Two or three of the foremost of the pursuers now appeared within calling distance, and ordered Bannister to halt.

"Stop at your peril!" said he to his prisoner.

"Yer ben't er gwine ter shoot me down now, arter I'se done toted fa'r with yer so long, be yer?" pleaded the captive guard, fearing the rector would take the course he knew too well would be taken by his own associates under the same circumstances.

"No, my man, I can't do that, nor shall I ask you to fight your friends, though I can't permit you to return to them. But I may as well now stop and turn at bay. Don't stand near me, for I don't want to shield myself at your expense. Get under shelter if you can."

. . . . The rector had at length absolutely given up all hope of escaping, and was prepared to welcome the merciful ball which should strike his heart and prevent his falling into the hands of fiends who he knew would be merciless. But he felt also that he would be but discharging a public duty did he die fighting to the last these enemies of law and justice.

The gray of the dawn was just beginning to show in faint streaks. Bannister cast one briefly lingering glance at the sign of approaching day, and as he did so there was such a smile on his serene features as only the faces of martyrs wear.

Then he sternly addressed himself to the death-struggle.

A few well-directed shots from the rifle he carried caused a temporary halt on the

part of his pursuers, more than one of whom had fallen wounded.

"Wall, Eldah, I'm danged ef yo' ben't the gamest man I'se seed in all the fightin' I'se had ter do sence I done jined the Moonshiners!" said the captive guard.

"My friend, will you do me a favor if you go to the city after I am dead (for they will put an end to me some way)?"

"'Deed, suh, I'll do hit ef hit costs me my life," said the man, with an earnestness which surprised Bannister. "Yo'se er straight-up-an'-down fellah, lak' I don't run agin oncet in a dog's age; and what-evah yo' wants yo'se on'y got ter name hit."

"Then please go to the Marshal," resumed the rector, "and tell him how I died. He will not fail to tell *her*," he added to himself.

"Fo' Gord will I!" the man exclaimed.

"And tell me, my good man," continued the rector, "if you have no scruples about giving me the information, what did your people intend to do with me in that little cabin?"

"They done 'lowed to buhn up you an' yer dogs in thar, suh."

A slight shudder ran through the frame of the rector at this clear confirmation of his supposition; but his great soul was unshaken, and his superb equipoise was undisturbed.

"And now," he said, addressing his prisoner, "I will give you something to present to the officers of the Government in case you are arrested. I have time to write it before the attack is renewed."

Tearing a leaf from his memorandum book, he wrote:

"To the U. S. Marshal: This man deserves the clemency of the Government. He has done me a good service in my last extremity.

"GEOFFREY BANNISTER."

"Now, my man," he resumed, "I release you. Get back to your friends as quickly as you please."

"Nary, Eldah! I ain't ergwine ter hev no mo' truck with them thar fellahs. I kin tell yer that I'se done had ernough uv this dog-goned moonshinin' ter last me my nat'ral life, ef I shud live ter be ez old ez Methuseler!" was the reply of the suddenly transformed outlaw.

The rare and clean courage of the rector had proved an inspiration to this rude child of nature. Bannister answered him:

"Bravely said, my good fellow! Now is a good time to turn round and resolve to be a man among men."

"Wall, yo' see, Eldah," resumed the man, "yo'se play'd squar' with me in this yere

deal, an' I'se boun' ter do the same by yo', an' yo' kin bet yer last scad that I'll stand by yer ter the eend."

"But you shall not fight for me," said the rector, the loaded revolver in whose pocket might have been of service in the hands of this new recruit, had he been willing to accept such service.

Therefore, with the magnanimity and self-sacrifice ever manifest in his actions, he first saw his prisoner safely sheltered, and then prepared to meet, single-handed, the foe and the fate which were both so near at hand.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR GALAHAD SHOWS HIS METTLE.

The pursuing Moonshiners, aggravated by the effect of the rector's firing, and impatient of the delay in retrieving their escaped prey, now came on with redoubled fury, with the "boss" at their head, who shouted to Bannister:

"Hold up yo' hands, thar!"

"Never!" was the reply of the sturdy rector.

Bannister had gained a shelter behind a brush-heap, from which he again fired several effective shots, once more temporarily checking the advance upon him. But such check was only momentary. This time, however, the pursuers came on more warily than before. The head of the "boss" was bandaged, showing that he had been hit by Bannister's last fire.

A ball now struck the St. Bernard dog, and he fell dead at the feet of the rector.

"Stand firm, Canute!" said Bannister to his great Dane, patting him on the head. "Your turn and mine will soon come. Let us die as becomes spirits undaunted!"

Canute seemed to comprehend the words,

for, casting a sympathetic glance at his dead comrade, he stood proudly up beside his master, and gave a low bark of approval.

—At this moment a shot was fired from the bridlepath in the opposite direction from that in which the Moonshiners were approaching, and the rector's captive fell with a ball in his leg.

"Gee-whillikens!" exclaimed the man. "This yere's hard luck, ter be brung down in sich er way, when er fellah cain't send back er shot in retuhn!"

"Raise your handkerchief as a sign of surrender," said the rector. "It's the Government deputies!"

"I hain't got no hankercher—never had one," answered this sample specimen of the "poor white."

"Here, then, raise mine. If I raise it, your friends will think I'm surrendering to them?"

As the rector stepped from his shelter to give his handkerchief to the man, a bullet from the Moonshiners came whizzing along and the captive guard exclaimed:

"H—ll! 'Xcuse me, Eldah, but yo' done got 'er then, hot!"

The ball had plowed along the temple of the rector, starting a stream of blood over his whole cheek.

The man raised the handkerchief, and

presently a troop of mounted deputies came riding on a full gallop to the spot, and the leader was dumfounded when he discovered the rector, whom he at once recognized, with a Moonshiner standing near him. Bannister briefly explained the situation, and the deputies now charged on the Moonshiners, who, too much exhausted by their chase, and too short of ammunition, to make a fight against their fresh and thoroughly armed assailants, beat a retreat. They were closely followed up, and the rector's captive was ordered to be mounted on a horse for the purpose of again acting as guide.

"Hit 'peahs ter me purty dog-goned sartin that I'se the usefulest cuss in these yere diggin's 'bout this time," said the wounded go-between Ouch! Be kinder keeful uv that thar game laig uv mine, fellahs! Fust I done steeh'd the Eldah outer trouble, an' now I'se got ter steeh yo'uns inter trouble; fur thar's gwinter be er hot scrap when yo' gits the Moonshiners hived in the cabin thar, ez shu' ez I'se a sinnah."

"It is indeed pretty hard on you, my brave friend," said the rector to him in a sympathizing tone; "but I am going back with you, in order to see this thing out."

"I ben't er complainin', suh," responded the guide; "but, Eldah, ef yer'll erlow me ter make er sergestion, ef I wuz in yo'

place, when I hed oncet got outer the clutches uv them thar devils, I shud stay out. Yo' know putty well what's in sto' fur yo' ef they git yer inter their hands agin."

"My dear sir," said the leader of the posse to Bannister, "I strongly protest against your accompanying us in the condition you are in. I insist on your remaining here under the protection of a couple of my men."

"Not by any means," replied the rector. "This is but a scratch, and I am now binding it up so that it will trouble me no more for the present. I have some valuable points that will aid you in capturing these tigers when you drive them to their den."

Bannister was given the horse of one of the deputies, and the cavalcade proceeded on the track of the fleeing Moonshiners, who, familiar with the way, were enabled to make better time than their mounted pursuers.

"Mr. Bannister," said the leader, "it seems to me that we are making a mistake. These men will hardly be so foolish as to go directly to their cabin. They will be more likely to separate and hide in the woods. It would be better for my men to divide and pursue them in different directions."

"I beg leave to differ with you in toto,"

replied Bannister. "I do not believe one of these Moonshiners will fail to make his way directly to the place of their rendezvous. If my eyes have not deceived me, I have discovered very strong reasons for their doing so, and also for their desiring that you should follow them thither and take possession of their stronghold."

The leader of the deputies looked puzzled at this apparent contradiction in the rector's utterance. The latter then explained the discovery of the trap-door in his little cabin prison, and continued:

"While I was taking a hasty glance from the entrance out of the still-room into the subterranean passage, I thought I observed a fall-board looped up by leather straps, on the side of the room toward the large cabin; and while I was in that cabin awaiting my removal to the smaller one, I fancied I saw the same apparatus. Now my theory is that that fall-board, or whatever you may call it, is a trap of the kind wherewith your detectives have been caught more than once, and on a notable occasion resulting in a terrible massacre."

"And you think they would induce us to enter the cabin and then open fire on us from that ambushade?"

"Yes; and in case your force proved too many for them, they would hope to escape by the secret passage I have described.

But wait a moment. I have an idea that I can confirm my impression in this regard."

Riding to the front, he conferred with the Moonshiner who was acting as guide, and then returning to the leader, he said:

"I am correct. It is a death-trap."

A thrill ran through the leader's frame as he saw what might have been before him but for the foresight of the rector; and as they were now nearing the Moonshiners' cabin, he said:

"My dear sir, you were designed by nature for a soldier rather than a clergyman. Let me ask you to direct the movements of my men in the attack we are about to make."

The rector did as requested; and by the time the cabin was reached, not a Moonshiner could be seen.

"They's all inside, boss," said the guide, "every danged one uv 'em; an' they 'spects you-all ter foller 'em; but ef yer heah me, yer'll fight devilish shy uv that move."

By Bannister's direction, the greater portion of the force deployed in front of the cabin, but at a considerable distance, among the trees, behind which they could shelter themselves; while a smaller portion stealthily made their way to the little cabin, led by Bannister himself. Then those in front of the cabin opened a fusillade upon it. The Moonshiners replied,

but quite ineffectually. Still, the deputies kept up their fire, although equally ineffectual with that of those inside. It was now evident that the main force of the Moonshiners was in the front part of their rendezvous, that is, in the main cabin. At this stage, instructing the deputies to continue their firing, Bannister sent word to have about half the force deployed in front of the cabin steal around under cover of the forest and join him in the little cabin. Among these reinforcements was the leader, although he still left the operations in charge of the carefully managing rector. As the door of this cabin, it will be remembered, could not be seen from the main cabin, this movement was successfully performed without being discovered by the Moonshiners.

Bannister now lifted up the iron trap-door opening into the underground passage, and, placing himself at the head of some seven or eight men, all in their stocking-feet, made such an adroit and rapid movement that the passage was gotten safely through and the still-room entered before they were discovered; and then the two or three men in the still-room were easily captured at the rifle's point. Bannister hastily led the force to the fall-board, where were found a number of rifles lying in position, ready to be used, when

the retreat should be made from the main room of the cabin, for the purpose of catching the posse in the death-trap.

Unfastening the strap that held the fall-board, and simultaneously ranging the men in front of the opening that would be made when it was let down, the rector sprang the trap. The board was eight or ten feet in length, and when it fell the Moonshiners in the cabin were thunder-struck to see a serried row of gleaming rifle-barrels trained on them.

"Take your men, Captain," said Bannister, hurriedly: "you can now manage them better than I."

The leader of the posse then addressed the Moonshiners in these words:

"Men, we have caught you in your own trap. You can all lay down your weapons and throw up your hands at once, or have just such a raking fire opened upon you as you were prepared to open upon us."

Never was a set of men more completely taken aback. The "boss" saw it was all up with them, and said:

"Boys, they's done got us this time. Hit's no use standin' out any longer. We mout, as well throw up our hands."

And up went every pair of hands but one.

"You-all kin hold up yo' hands ef yer want ter, but don't count me in," said Big

Moll, who stood with a cocked revolver in her hand. "The durned Feds kin come an' take me ef they want ter, but they don't git me without er taste of cold lead inter the bahgin."

"Bully for you, Moll!" cried one of the men in his enthusiastic admiration of the woman's "game."

But the captain of the posse was equal to this unique diversion. While a portion of the deputies, under cover of the rifle-barrels ranged in the fall-board opening, were handcuffing the Moonshiners, the captain gave the order:

"Let the man who cried out 'Bully for you!' step out of the line."

The man did so.

"Now, go and disarm that woman," said the captain, "and hold her until she is handcuffed."

Seeing a rifle or two turned especially upon him, the zealous claqueur (who proved to be Big Moll's sweetheart) proceeded with a wry face, after a moment's hesitation, to perform his assigned job, which he accomplished after a brief struggle.

The front door was now opened, and the remnant of the posse were astonished at seeing the entire band of outlaws captive without the firing of a gun. But the supreme astonishment of the occasion was

that of the Moonshiners themselves, at seeing the posse in possession of their rear retreat, never having dreamed of the rector discovering the trap-door in his cabin prison. Not only that discovery, but his brave stand against his pursuing persecutors, together with his equally brave, admirably planned, and exceptionally successful charge through the underground passage, were long afterward themes of local romance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A HEART-REBELLION.

The second signally successful capture of Moonshiners was an event besides which scarcely anything else was talked of in the city for a week. Geoffrey Bannister was the hero of the hour, and his name was on everybody's lips. His wound was not as severe as that received in the attempted assassination, but it confined him for several days at home, where the calls of congratulation and sympathy were numerous, embracing all classes of citizens.

Among the first to receive the details of the battle of Bannister with the Moonshiners, and among the last of the rector's congratulatory callers, was Grace Thorndike. She heard from the Marshal's own lips the entire story, and with him it was a labor of love to narrate the capture of the belated camper-out by the outlaws, his discovery of the subterranean passage, his escape from the flames prepared for him, his stout fight with his pursuers, and his charge upon and shrewdly planned capture, with the assistance of the posse, of the whole band, who, without his admir-

able foresight, would in all likelihood have turned the tables on the posse, and trapped and massacred them in a body.

Grace's face glowed with pleasure as she listened, and her heart was permeated with a strange joy—one might almost say with an interdicted joy. And when the Marshal was through, there came within his listener's breast a peculiar revulsion of feeling. All the currents of her sympathy set afresh toward the popular hero. A wave of regret rushed over her heart, and she felt as if no price would be too great to pay could she purchase the recall of that fateful letter.

When Grace made her delayed call on the wounded rector, she found him nearly ready to get upon his feet again. She was at first reserved, and said to him with a studied gentleness:

"Your heroism is by this time an old story, and therefore I can but repeat the praise that is in every one's mouth."

"And I can only answer you as I have answered others," he said, "that I deserve no especial credit for my conduct; for I didn't go out hunting Moonshiners, and got out of a bad scrape in the best way I could."

"And a truly courageous way it was," she responded, while a streak of color stole into her face. "But I may say one thing

that will possibly be a little different from the usual run of your congratulations. By the rare discretion which you so admirably coupled with valor, in your experience on that terrible night and morning, you have redeemed the lower word from the prejudice thrown upon it by the immortal bard."

"I am deeply grateful to you for so thoughtful a commendation," he replied, coloring in turn, "and I shall treasure it among the best of the many kind things said to me and about me concerning this event, in which too much credit has been given to myself, and too little to those whom I merely assisted in their strenuous and admirably successful efforts."

She took her departure, conscious that, malgré her intention with regard to self-constraint, it had been materially broken in upon during the interview.

That night it could hardly be said with truth that Grace Thorndike sought sleep in vain, for she scarcely sought it at all. She sat in her room long into the small hours, trying to comprehend the condition in which her heart found itself—sat with a turbulent breast and throbbing brow; and when at last she betook herself to her pil-

low, it was to seek rest rather than slumber.

Her reflections took no definite direction—it was her feelings instead of her thoughts that assumed the control. The rebellion her heart had begun still continued, and regret was turning into remorse. There were no grounds apparent for self-accusation. Her course had been guided by the highest motives; and yet she was unsatisfied—thoroughly, radically unsatisfied, and utterly discontented with herself and with the world.

The next morning, as she kept her bed late, Aunt Phebe came in to see her, seriously concerned at her non-appearance.

“Miss Grace, yo’ looks lak’ yo’ mouter ben mongst dem dar Moonshiners agin. Yo’s all done up, honey. I reckon Aunt Pheeb ’ll hev ter make yo’ some catnip ur seeny tea. Which will it be, chile?”

“Neither, Auntie. I’m not as bad as I look. If you’ll make me a cup of strong tea and a piece of dry toast, I’ll get along nicely. And, please, Aunt Phebe, deny me to all callers. I want to be alone, Auntie.”

This last she said in an appealing tone, which by no means tended to reassure the old servant; but she did as directed, and

after a while Grace was sitting up in her room, although the interdiction as to visitors was strictly maintained.

Grace Thorndike was face to face with an issue such as seldom comes to souls like hers. These issues generally overtake those who are lacking in decision of character, and this was an infirmity that could never be justly imputed to her. She customarily held well in hand the lines guiding the chariot of life, and made far fewer mistakes of policy than the average of voyagers along its highway. But the present issue was not one which could have been avoided by any circumspection or foresight.

Nor was it in any sense a moral issue that was before her.

There are situations in life which transcend the realm of ethics, and are not to be solved by moral precepts. It is very easy for the self-sufficient soul, enwrapped in its moral equanimity, far removed from the scene and the circumstances, to declare what would be right or proper to do or to refrain from doing in a given sharp emergency; but such declarations are mainly as ungracious as they are gratuitous, for acute contingencies have generally each a

law unto itself. It is in the close conflicts of life's warfare as with the decisive moments which constitute the turning-point of many a great battle in actual war: the prescribed rules and regulations are applicable and useful up to a certain point, when the exigencies of the moment or of the hour must dictate the conduct of the conflict.

No graver issue than the one which Grace's heart forced upon her can be presented to a man or woman in any of the varied contingencies of life, for the very reason that it involved a disruption of one of those higher compromises in action which have a stronger obligation than ordinary rules of conduct. The choice between her two suitors she had practically settled in favor of Chenowith; and although not having acquainted him with the fact, she had foreshadowed it in such wise as a discreet lover can scarcely misunderstand. It was a settlement in which all her better and loftier faculties had participated. She had made it not on the spur of the moment, not at the prompting of emotion, but after troubled weeks of consideration, and at the dictate of what she deemed mature judgment.

And now her heart, thrilled with the intelligence of the conflict with which the

ears of all the community were ringing, was already in mutiny at her decision.

The leading reason for deciding in favor of Chenowith had been that he was a battler wearing the scars of the contests of existence, and among them those of the wounds she had herself dealt him in the struggle wherein he had worsted her and with blade in hand forced his way to the citadel of her heart. Another reason was, that, while his rival seemed to live apart from the every-day efforts and trials and difficulties of life, and to move in a sphere above and beyond, he, her equal and her companion, was a toiler in the quarry of existence, and had, so to speak, the color of earth's clay upon his garments.

But, lo! Her saintly hero, whose only demerit was that he was lifted too far above the strata of common humanity for her to mingle in his struggles and labors, had proved himself, by a crucial test, a very knight of to-day; a master of living, breathing emergencies; one to seize critical situations and hammer them, red-hot, on the anvil of opportunity, into sharp, glistening successes. The very qualities she had deemed to have been absent in him, the world was now praising him for possessing in an eminent degree, and she herself had to his own face joined in the acknowledgment; yea, she

now even discerned the color of earth's clay also on *his* garments.

Her Sir Galahad had shown himself to be a champion whose "stout lance thrusteth sure," not only metaphorically but actually, not only in the abstract but in the concrete—who could make himself feared in the lower as well as respected in the higher sphere, and beloved in both.

After remaining in seclusion in her room for two or three days, Grace Thorndike mounted her horse one morning, and rode out of town, she listed not in what direction—only to get away from the scrutinizing glances of the world: this was all she sought. She permitted her horse to choose his own course, and by chance the animal came into the same road leading to the mountains in which Bannister and she were ambushed. The idea then occurred to her to continue her jaunt to the hamlet which they had visited on that ride; and finding an opportunity in the village where she had lain when wounded, she sent back home word of her intention, and then continued her way thither.

The farther she got from the city and the sparser became the farms, the freer and more comfortable she seemed to be.

She even enlivened the way by singing a number of her favorite songs. But not the freedom from human observation, nor the melody with which she freighted the air, nor the bracing autumnal temperature, nor yet the poetry of motion created by her steed in his rhythmical gallop, served to remove the burden borne by her heart.

Reaching the little village as the sun began its decline, she proceeded to make the rounds of the cabins, learning of the condition of their occupants, and laying the foundation for another visit to be made when she should have time to provide herself with things to be distributed among them.

While she was making her tour of inspection, a horseman rode into the hamlet, and, to her great surprise, Geoffrey Bannister alighted. Her heart bounded with the thought that he had followed her up there; but when he told her that he had been on a trip beyond, and was returning by way of the settlement, she dismissed that idea. His greeting to her was very cordial, and nothing could be kinder than his demeanor while he aided her in her visitation. She observed that he examined his watch once or twice during the tour of inspection, and said to him:

"These people have been consulting together, and have desired me to inform you

that they can keep you overnight, in case your return this evening would bring you late home, as seems now likely. I shall not think of trying to return to-night."

"No," he replied; "you may thank the good cottagers for me very kindly; but I think I will push on, for my vestry meets to-night, and my good steed, by a little extra exertion, will enable me to get there before they adjourn."

He did not say that he had an engagement with his vestry, nor that it was in any way essential or important that he should be at their meeting; therefore she was not slow to comprehend that he was not desirous of improving the opportunity afforded him of spending an evening with her. She could not, however, desist from admonishing him of the danger of passing at night over the road he had to traverse. He smiled, and replied:

"I do not purpose to ride as slowly as you and I rode along that highway."

She said to herself:

"Would that I could share his danger with him again!"

She could not in reason urge him to remain any longer; and as she clasped his hand in bidding him good night, there was a trembling thrill in it which the rector recalled in the twilight of many an after day.

When, gracefully waving his hat at her, he rode away on his proudly stepping steed, Grace Thorndike felt as may feel the banished exile standing upon a desert strand, while disappears in the offing the ship that brought him, which he shall never see more. She knew that henceforth, while courtesy might be transmuted into gentleness, and kindness into loving-kindness, yet there was to be on either side no further demonstrations of tenderness—nothing that might recall the exorcised specter of affection. In this respect their paths were to be as distinct as if one lay in Christendom and the other in Cathay.

—Nevertheless her brief visit with Geoffrey Bannister had had upon Grace Thorndike a calming though saddening effect. He had won a new reverence from her by his stern acceptance of her decision as a finality, while by his treatment of her he demonstrated that her rejection of him had left no sting in his breast, though it had left a wound which it would require the cicatrizing hand of time to heal.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PEACE BY THE SOUNDING SEA.

Grace returned home the next day, and that afternoon rode out to the Downing farm and said to Eliza:

"Do you want to take an excursion with me, Lizzie?"

"Yes, Miss Grace."

"Why don't you ask me where I am going?"

"I don't care, Miss Grace. I'll go anywhere with you that you want me to go. When do you intend to start?"

"To-morrow morning."

"All right—I'll be ready."

"I'm going to Savannah, Lizzie, and I may stay a week or a fortnight."

"It makes no difference how long you stay, Miss Grace. As I am in mourning, I don't need any special preparations in the way of clothing."



Arriving in Savannah, Grace, with her attendant, spent a day or two with friends in that city and then went out to Tybee

Island. Her Savannah friends, as well as Lizzie Downing, thought it rather odd that she should visit that resort so late in the season; but as she had a way and will of her own in most things, they made no special remarks on the peculiar movement.

Again seated on the piazza of the same hotel at which she had stayed earlier in the season, watching the waves break on the shore, and lulled by their murmurs, Grace enjoyed the first moments of peace she had experienced since the revolt in her heart.

"Here," she said to Lizzie, "we have in these days a safe retreat. The fashionable world will not intrude here now, and the unfashionable world that comes at this unseasonable time cares as little for us as we do for it. Here we may think what we please, say what we please, and do what we please, with none to molest or make us afraid."

Then she hummed an old air:

"We'll say to the world, 'Go by, go by,'
Nor give to the world a reason why.

For its frowns or favors why should we
care?

We set no sail for an opportune gale,

And we've labeled our leisure 'Not for sale,'
In the grand vendue of Vanity Fair."

"You can indulge in your favorite pastime of whistling, and I in mine of talking, and when your throat and my tongue are tired, we'll go down and wade in the surf, with the other girls among the remnant of the natives hereabout, and not shiver with fear every time we lift our feet or raise our skirts or voices, lest we offend against propriety."

"Miss Grace," said Lizzie, "you're very human, and that's why I like you. Some people think you are toned up very high, but I find you to be a right down flesh and blood being, and warm flesh and blood at that."

"Thanks for the compliment, Lizzie; it is as fine a one as I could desire."

"Miss Grace, you have left out one of our means of passing the time here, and that is reading."

"The one I care least for, Lizzie. I haven't come here to read, save as a side entertainment—a sort of luncheon. By the way, we might finish that novel we began reading some weeks ago, and in which we have been interrupted by some unforeseen incidents."

Lizzie got the book, and, both getting into comfortable positions without regard

to grace, she began the concluding part of the latest popular work of fiction. After she had been reading less than an hour Grace interposed with—

“Lay aside the book, please, Lizzie. You don’t read as if your soul were in it, and surely I don’t listen as if mine were; and it’s rank hypocrisy, and gross injustice to an author, to read a book in any other way.”

Grace then placed her arm around the waist of her attendant as tenderly as might a lover have done, and together they strolled along the beach, in the soft autumnal sunshine, and chatted like schoolgirls out for their first vacation. One topic impinging upon another, at length they came to that of Grace’s relations with Chenowith, and, prompted by the opportune occasion, Grace gave the girl her full confidence, supplying all the latter did not already know of the crisis in her heart-experience within the past few days.

Thorough and cultured society woman as was Grace Thorndike, her heart somehow thirsted after a simple and unadulterated confidence such as that of honest Eliza—one not roiled by the residuum of self-interest likely to attach to any confidante chosen from the social ranks. It was a singular inclination, but who has not felt a like one?—a hankering, as it

were, after a season or an occasion of intellectual or conventional abandon or negligé, when the judgment may prune and trim and correct itself, in the light of hard common sense and homely world-wisdom gleaned from uncontaminate minds and hearts, and take anew its bearings as it can in no other way.

—Having given Chenowith no opportunity to meet her since the return of the victorious expedition against the Moonshiners, Grace was in ignorance as to what construction he might have put upon her seclusion and declension to receive any calls, his own included; and she was not certain what she should say to him when she met him. She had not yet settled in her own mind, nor in her own heart, whether she could any longer consistently or in common honesty receive his attentions, in case he continued to pay them after having become aware of the revolution in her feelings; concerning which point, however, her knowledge of Chenowith's character made the probabilities, in her view, strongly in favor of his continuing the prosecution of his suit.

With the whole situation as thus outlined Grace made Lizzie Downing acquainted, as thoroughly as she would have done with one of her own social rank, relying upon what she had experienced of

the girl's sterling sincerity, and her unsophisticated and experimental knowledge, to furnish her some practical and healthful suggestions for action upon in her heart's supreme emergency.

And then Grace asked this vital question:

"Now, Lizzie, what course would you pursue if you were in my circumstances?"

By this time they had returned from their long walk on the beach, and were again seated on the piazza. Lizzie held her head between her hands for some time, and at length said:

"It is hard to answer your question, Miss Grace. If I was in your circumstances, I should probably look at things very differently from what I do now; for I should have a more intelligent means of forming my judgment. You-all in society take views of things of this nature that are wide apart from those taken by us simple folks. But, the way I look at it, it appears to me that you ought to love Mr. Chenowith if you can."

"Why, Lizzie?"

"Well, the truth is, Miss Grace, I don't reckon that Mr. Bannister will ever ask you again, and it would be a great pity for—"

The girl hesitated. Grace helped her out.

"A great pity for a woman of my opportunities and prospects to fall to the ground between two stools. Own up, Lizzie, that that is what you were going to say."

"Well, Miss Grace, *wouldn't* it be a great pity?"

"'Deed it would, Lizzie," replied Grace, smiling at the girl's candor, "and I might suffer the calamity of dying an old maid."

"And you'd have me to bear you company."

"Not a bit of it, Lizzie! Whatever fate be in store for me in this regard, you are surely reserved for some true man's loving wife. The lines of your life have not crossed each other as have mine, and I hope and pray that they may never do so."

"No, Miss Grace, I trust not. While the settling of such questions as you have on your hands will only strengthen your nature, it would crush me outright. That is the difference between us."

Grace then brought Lizzie around to talk again of Chenowith, and the girl said:

"I'm right sure, Miss Grace, that you'll never have occasion to regret taking Mr. Chenowith for a husband. If it hadn't been for the memory of my poor Ben, I should have been Chenowith's wife to-day; and whether or not I should have made *him* happy, is a serious question; but he would have made *me* happy—reasonably

happy. Of this I am as sure as that the surf is beating down there on the shore. I think it very probable that in the nature of things he would have become really tired of me—or, to put it a little mildly, he would have grown away from me; and at the same time he would have been able to keep me in ignorance of the fact. That is a wonderful knack that some men have, Miss Grace, and it's a blessed knack, too. A man who has this knack wouldn't lack much of being able to make any woman happy."

"You have touched the very point, Lizzie, on which hinged my rejection of Mr. Bannister. I was afraid that he would grow beyond me, without possessing the knack, as you call it, of keeping me in ignorance of the fact."

"I don't know about that, Miss Grace. But right here I want to say this about Mr. Bannister. Those who live in a higher sphere have notions of their own concerning love; but if I should ever again get to thinking as much of a man as you used to think of Mr. Bannister, I should continue to think the same of him to the end of my days. Now, I hope you won't take this offensively, Miss Grace."

"Not at all, Lizzie; and I'm going to reply to it by using what the scholars call an antithesis. I tell you, in all serious-

ness, that there has never been an hour in which I thought less of Mr. Bannister than I had previously done, notwithstanding my attachment for Mr. Chenowith."

"Well, Miss Grace, I'm right glad to hear you say that, though I can't exactly solve the seeming contradiction; for Mr. Bannister is the noblest man I have ever met or ever expect to meet."

"And you don't think, Lizzie, that there's any chance of Mr. Chenowith's growing away from me in case I marry him?"

"'Deed I don't, Miss Grace—no more than there was of my poor Ben growing away from or getting tired of me. You see, I should never have let him. You never would let Mr. Chenowith do so. In many cases it all depends on a woman, whether a man is faithful. I could have kept my Ben true if I had lived with him a hundred years. You could do the same with Mr. Chenowith. I tell you, Miss Grace, that when a woman gets the right kind of a hold on a man's heart, if he's half a man, it's largely her fault if she doesn't keep it to the far end."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAN THE HEART SERVE TWO MASTERS?

One delightfully pleasant afternoon, while Lizzie was strolling by herself on the beach, Grace, having spent some time at the piano in a study which will be hereafter referred to, sat some time in her favorite occupation of watching the waves breaking on the shore, deeply absorbed in thought, when Lizzie returned, and Grace thus addressed her:

“Do you think, Lizzie, that the heart can have a divided affection?”

“Have you a case in view, Miss Grace, where the objects of such affection, if it may exist, are both living, or where one of them is dead?”

“I mean where both are living. Why, is there such a very wide distinction between the two cases, Lizzie?”

“Not as I look at them, Miss Grace, though of course you know that the world in general takes a different view. On this double question I have my own ideas, Miss Grace, but I don't know that I can make them clear to you.”

"Try it, Lizzie. You've never yet failed to make me understand you."

"Well, it's this way: I was born in a lower grade of life than you, with a narrower range of thought, and fewer ideas to feed my brain on. It's the same way with my heart. It couldn't cling to more than one object in life. Having loved my poor Ben, I couldn't love any other, living or dead. I might, and possibly may, marry for convenience, and be contented, and conditionally happy. But I can never truly love again.

"Now, Miss Grace, while I say this, I admit that it is a misfortune. It is the lot of one born, like me, in a lower range of thoughts and feelings, and I accept my lot without a murmur. But I'm not so foolish as to measure everybody's experience in my half-bushel. I think that a heart with a larger and broader experience than mine might learn to love more than once, and love truly in the repetition; and, to tell the down-right truth, if a heart can love one person in the grave and one in the land of the living, I don't see why it can not love two in the land of the living. Whether it ought to do so or not, Miss Grace, is another question, entirely."

While Lizzie had been talking thus, she was seated on an ottoman at Grace's feet; and when she made this last remark she

looked up into the face of her elder friend with such an expression of earnestness that Grace was almost startled. She took the girl's face in her hands, and imprinted a warm kiss on her lips which absolved her from any offense that might have been involved in construing her words as a gentle rebuke.

One afternoon Grace thus introduced the subject of Chenowith's flirtation with the blonde belle of the city:

"Lizzie, you never knew Maud Mellington, did you?"

"No, Miss Grace, and from what I have heard of her, I'm thankful that I never did."

"Why, what have you heard about her?"

"I don't reckon there's anybody of consequence who doesn't know about her patronizing the Voodoo."

Grace started. "Maud must herself have let out the secret," she said half to herself.

"No," replied Lizzie; "she would never do that—it was Aunt Keziah who did it. Maud must have been half-crazy to put herself in the old harriidan's power."

"She was half-crazed with jealousy, Lizzie. Do you think that Mr. Chenowith ever cared anything for her, Lizzie?"

"Nothing to speak of, Miss Grace."

"And yet he committed the sin of flirting with her."

"Yes, Miss Grace, but he never offered to flirt with me, and I don't reckon he ever did with you."

"Indeed he did not, Lizzie."

"Well I've a notion, Miss Grace, that the sin of flirtation, especially in a gentleman, depends a good deal on the lady he is flirting with."

"I think you have hit the right spot there, Lizzie. And I also think the very fact that he refrained from any such attempts with you and me, is the highest tribute he could have paid to our womanhood."

On the last day of their stay at Tybee Grace seemed more inspirited than usual, and had read for some time with Lizzie sitting as usual at her feet listening, when she suddenly laid aside her book, and asked her faithful companion:

"Lizzie, what proportion of people in this world do you think really seek to control the tide of affection in their hearts, and do not yield unreservedly to its influences?"

"A mighty small proportion, Miss Grace."

"Then what creatures of emotion we are on the average, to be sure!"

"But, Miss Grace, in my limited round of experience I have noticed that there are an amazing sight of people who don't agree as to what love really is. What some persons look on as the very essence of love, other persons would hardly call love at all. I have a case in my own experience that illustrates this idea as clearly as anything else I could think of. I had a cousin who married a judge, an awfully good man, and a right smart man. He was just as kind to her as a man of his composition could possibly be, and she worshiped him like an idol; but, Miss Grace, whenever I visit them there's an icicly atmosphere about the house that chills me to the marrow. Now that kind of life would break the back of my love outright; in about a twelvemonth I should be in a lunatic asylum or in the graveyard. But my cousin grows fat on it. That's just the difference in the make-up of different individuals, and also in the composition of genuine love. The old saying, 'What is one man's meat is another's poison,' applies, to my notion, right aptly to this feeling, or sentiment, or passion, or whatever you may choose to call it, of love. Some women seem to have their love nourished on neglect, and others on positive cruelty;

either would kill my love, deader than a nit."

"So I think it would mine, Lizzie, as much as people may talk of the undying nature of true love."

"And don't you think, Miss Grace, that, after all, love is very much like the human body—that it needs to be kept warm, and comfortable, and have plenty of food, and good food at that; and that if it doesn't have these things it will freeze or starve, just like everything else that is mortal?"

"Indeed I do, Lizzie."



On the last day of their sojourn at Ty-bee, Grace said to her attendant and friend:

"We have been talking these pleasant days, Lizzie, among other topics, of love and lovers, and of various things connected with those essential objects in the economy of human life. And in the intervals of our talk I have been thinking up a song, which embodies our notions on these matters—for we think and feel about alike on them; and I have also thought out what I believe is a passable air for the song. Now, if you will promise to listen attentively, and afterward to compliment me handsomely, I will sing the production for you."

"That's fishing for a compliment without bait, Miss Grace, like our boys fish for pickerel in the shady pools of Deep Creek. My poor Ben used to say that these pickerel fools were more nearly like human fools than anything else that swims on water or walks on land. But I'll give you the compliment in advance, Miss Grace, by saying that you couldn't produce a poor thing if you tried to do so."

"That is a royal compliment indeed, Lizzie, and what I value in it most highly is that I know it to be a thoroughly honest one—the kind not to be found in the market in these selfish days."

Grace then went to the piano and sang the following:

MY TRUE-LOVE TESTS.

No lover with head in the clouds want I,
No lover with spirit rapt, riding the sky;
No, my lover must closer cling to earth,
Where love of the genuine kind has birth—
The love that is sure and enduring.

The lover who wins my heart from me
No idle dreamer of dreams must be,
But a doer of deeds, who with ungloved
hands
In earth's highway, busied and resolute,
stands:
His love will be true and enduring.

The lover with whom I shall pass my days
Must know to the core the world and its
 ways;
He must be a man where manliness counts;
He must draw the truth from its pristine
 founts,
And cherish a faith enduring.

The champion who would invade my life,
And share with me in the world's fierce
 strife,
Must bear some scars of the battle-field,
Some signet-marks of the foe on his shield,
 Showing valor true and enduring.

When a knight like this comes riding by,
I will raise my heart's portcullis high,
And bid him enter and take command
Of castle and keep, and manor-land,
 And rule with a love enduring.

These exchanges of confidence with her ingenuous attendant proved healthful and strengthening to Grace Thorndike, and materially aided her in clearing away the mists which enveloped her situation. Yet still her way remained to such an extent obscured, that there were a number of obstructive factors yet to be eliminated from the problem confronting her.

Nevertheless her days of sojourn by the sea were days of progress for her, and she

left for home with a heart grateful for such partial lifting of its burden as had been effected.

But she only went home to stay one night; and early the next morning started again for the little settlement in the mountains, with her horse well packed with things intelligently selected to meet the necessities and increase the comfort of its interesting group of inhabitants.

As a precautionary measure against what might not prove a desirable meeting on either side, Grace wrote a note to her rector, stating that she was about to spend a week in the settlement, and would take pleasure in distributing any supplies that might be sent thither during her stay.

Aunt Phebe was by no means reconciled to this fresh absence of Grace. The latter had told her:

"If anybody inquires for me, Auntie, you can tell the truth—say just where I am, and that I have gone for rest and quiet, where I will not be disturbed."

"But, Miss Grace," replied the old saint, "hain't yo' jes' done had a good long rest down dar ter Tybee?"

"Yes, Aunt Phebe, but I want more rest and more quiet."

"Miss Grace, I'se so'ly troubled 'bout yo', an' I'se grieved too, chile. 'Peahs lak' yo' don't done trust Aunt Phebe lak' yo'

useter do. I'se afeer'd, honey, yo'se keep-in' sumpin' back f'om yo' ole Auntie."

And with her capacious apron the veteran nourisher of all Grace's days wiped some big, scalding tears from her eyes.

Grace embraced and kissed the loyal servitor, and said:

"Be patient with me, Aunt Phebe, and have faith in me, and pray for me; and everything will be all right when I come back."

Then, with smiles and tears struggling together in her own eyes, she leaped upon her horse and was off for the mountains.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN OBTRUSIVE VISITOR BY NO MEANS AN
UNWELCOME ONE.

Grace Thorndike made a longer stay in the mountain settlement on this occasion than she had at first contemplated, and devoted her time to sewing for the different families, repairing the garments of the children, and rendering herself in various other ways useful to the little community. She found that these occupations, which took up nearly every moment of her time, contributed materially toward reconciling her to the result of the unexpected encounter with the rector, and also toward stilling the tourbillion that had been for many days raging in her breast; so that the brief season thus passed was one of rest and quietude for the spirit, though of activity for the body.

At the incipency of this mountain respite, she had, in so far as she was able, banished Chenoweth from her mind. Then, after a few days, she began to recall him to her thoughts; and at length she came to realize that she missed his ever fresh and piquant conversation. Finally,

she felt a longing for his presence: then she thought of returning home. She had now been nearly a fortnight in the contracted hamlet. One afternoon she was having her horse gotten ready for departure, when who should ride up before her, as she sat in front of one of the cabins, doing a final piece of sewing, but Reginald Chenowith?

Grace thrilled with pleasure at the sight of him whose image had of late so persistently forced itself upon her contemplation.

"And what brought you up into this out-of-the-way corner of the earth?" she asked.

"My horse."

"And pray what is the object of your quest?"

"Rest and food for me and my beast, after a tiresome ride."

"Are you searching for anybody? You couldn't expect to find any person of consequence here."

"I naturally expected to find the occupants of the cabins."

"Anybody else?"

"Yes, the mules and dogs."

"Anybody else?"

"Why, yes. I didn't know but there might be some Moonshiners concealed hereabout."

"And I presume you want to attend to

this matter right away, and get off as soon as possible."

"As soon as possible: yes."

"Well, as a sworn detective of the Government, I can inform you that I have this very morning been the rounds of all these cabins, and that there is not a Moonshiner here—not even a fraction of one. And as to entertainment for man or beast, they don't keep it here, and you'll find it farther on, at the forks of the roads; so you have no occasion to get off your horse, and nothing prevents you from continuing your journey."

"Yes, one thing prevents me."

"What is that?"

"I have lost something."

"And pray what have you lost?"

"A heart."

"Then, sir, you have come to the last place on earth to find it. We don't deal in hearts here, have no use for them, and would scarcely pick one up if we found it in the highway."

"But this heart of mine might be in the possession of some of the inhabitants here—some one, perhaps, who doesn't know the value of it."

"What kind uv a heart mout hit be [lapsing into dialect]—a gold one, in a lockit-like, ur on'y a imertation one?"

"Do you think I'd wear anything but a pure gold one?"

"I dunno—yo' cain't allers be shu' in these days. I'se know'd hea'ts sold on the mahket that wuz all brass, an' them ez bought 'em couldn't be convinced they wuz anything but the genewine article."

"But I can convince you that the heart I have lost is of the purest gold."

"Whar is yo' everdence?"

"I have the certificate of an expert, or of one who ought to be an expert."

"Perjuce hit."

"The trouble is, the expert is the very one whom I suspect of stealing my heart, and to give her testimony she would have to criminate herself."

"Look-a-heah, stranger, you'se a takin' up my time, an' yo' kin outtalk me inter the bagin'. So, ef yo' ainter gwineter jog on, yo' mout ez well git offen yer mustang."

"I don't ride er mustang, ef yer please, Miss. I'se got ez good a hoss ez any uv yo'uns up in this stretch o' ked'ntry."

"Wall, I s'pose I'se gotter look arter yo' animal. 'Beats all what er sight er trouble these lawyah-fellahs make when they git away fr'm home!"

"I kin take keer uv my own animal, I thank yer! All I ax is ter know whar the stable is at."

"Stable! [with ringing laughter]. Thar

ain't no stables in these pa'ts—everybody's knowin's ter that; thar's on'y sheds. Heah, Jimmy! [to an urchin whose jacket she had been mending]. Show this trav-'lin' fellah f'om the burg whar the cowshed is at.

"An' now, look-a-heah, stranger! Lemme gin yer a little piece uv *advice*. Yo' tongue ain't hung right fo' ter tackle the talk uv the folks up yere in this neck o' the woods, so yo' mout ez well not try hit; fo' yo'll git tangled up, an' not know whar yer at. Yo'd best hang onter the high-toneder talk you'all of the uppah-crust crowd hev down thar ter the burg."

The lad then led the way to the cowshed; and Chenowith, having put up his steed, made his way back to where Grace sat sewing.

"Well," she said, offering him her hand, and pushing toward him the stool on which the lad had been sitting, "since you are bound to stay, I may as well say that I am right glad to see you."

"I knew you would be," he said as he carried her hand to his mouth and kissed it, despite her attempt to withdraw it.

"Now, you mustn't bother me," she said, "for I'm very busy. But tell me, Mr. Presumption, how you knew I should be glad to see you. Didn't you get the word

I left at home, that I didn't want to see anybody?"

"Yes; but I knew that whatever might be your reason for secluding yourself, even if I were the cause, you would sooner or later want to see me again."

"That exceeds all the assurance I have ever known."

"It requires a vast amount of assurance to love you properly, Miss Grace."

"Now, you mustn't indulge in that kind of talk, for I haven't time to listen to it. Don't you see how very busy I am?"

"Isn't there some way in which I can help you?"

"Certainly. Did you ever make a kite?"

"Hundreds of them."

"Well, I wanted to make some kites for these lads, but was about to give it up on account of leaving so soon. But—by the way, has your horse had anything to eat?"

"Yes; I found some grain for him in the shed."

"And I reckon you would like to have something to eat as well. You see I thought of your horse's needs first."

"Well, I don't like to trouble you, but candor compels me to admit that I'm as hungry as a bear."

"That I knew very well. You looked it the moment I set eyes on you. They are cooking something for you in the cabin

there—I arranged for it while you were putting out your horse. Now, improve the time making the frames for the kites, and I'll get you some paper to cover them with. You will be called when your meal is ready. And bear in mind that you musn't talk to me while you are working, though you may talk to the boys."

"Oh, but I *must* talk to you. I can't remain so near you and preserve silence."

"Then you must be careful what you talk about."

He began at once on the kite-frames, and soon had all the youngsters of the settlement around him watching with glowing eyes the progress of his work. The lads buzzed about him so noisily, and kept him so busy with questions and suggestions, that he had scarcely an opportunity to say a word to Grace.

When his head was turned, she watched him with intense interest. She was pleased at the effort he made to engage the attention of the boys, and studied with satisfaction the play of his features as he discussed with them the details of his work. She thought he had never appeared to better advantage. She liked the earnestness with which he could enter into a task which the average man would have deemed beneath his dignity.

For many minutes he had said nothing

to Grace, and had scarcely looked her way. At length she said to him:

"You appear to be getting on swimmingly."

"Please don't talk to me—don't you see how busy I am?" he responded without looking up from his work.

The lads, appreciating this hit, broke out into a peal of laughter, in which Grace joined with great heartiness.

The improvised meal was now ready, and Chenowith laid by his work and entered the cabin, where Grace waited on him, and permitted him to talk freely.

"The boys," he said, during the repast, "tell me there isn't much cord in the entire settlement. I presume you need not be informed," he added smiling, "that we can't fly kites without cord."

"Oh, well, some one will have to go to the store at the forks of the road and buy some," she replied.

"I will saddle my horse and go when I have finished the kites," he volunteered.

"And I will go with you," she said.

"But you're so busy," he responded, archly. Fearing, however, that she would give up her intention, he added, "I'm afraid I couldn't find the way alone."

So, when the kites were ready for the strings, Chenowith saddled her horse with

his own, and together they started on their errand.

The woodbirds screamed with delight at having two such listeners to their songs, for their wild minstrelsy was without bounds in its boisterous exuberance. The October blasts had blown the fallen leaves across the wood-road, making a carpet such as might be spread in the path of a royal conqueror. The rabbits came out of their holes, and stood gazing with their pink eyes at the passing guests; the squirrels dodged from limb to limb, or stood munching nuts and chattering at the absorbed equestrian pair; and the partridges darted from their covers to take sly peeps at the disturbers of their peace, and then hid again in the thickets. But, among all the melodious-throated, swift-winged, or fleet-footed denizens of the forest, there was no pair whose hearts were lighter, or whose voices rang more thoroughly in harmony, than these intruders upon their merry diversions and wildwood symphonies.

—They were riding at a slow pace. They had been expressing their enthusiasm over the forest scenery enveloping them, when Chenowith said:

“You are not too busy now, I presume, to hear me talk on a theme of my own choosing?”

"No," she replied, with a benignant smile which thrilled his whole being, "you may talk what you please and how you please, and it will be a pleasure to listen to you."

"Then I will improve this supreme occasion to say, that, amid these solemn scenes, so completely separated from the active, bustling world, I experience a love for you that I have never before felt—a loftier, purer, diviner love. As I am in a higher material atmosphere, so I seem to be in a higher spiritual atmosphere. Before Heaven I say that a cleaner soul speaks to you beneath these majestic trees than has yet breathed love's accents to you. I feel springing within me greater and holier purposes. A freshness of spirit pervades me, as if I were about to begin life anew. With you as my inspiring genius I could pursue the path of existence toward ever better and truer ends."

"Those are noble words, Mr. Chenowith," she responded, "words such as no true woman ever listened to unmoved."

And then they talked on, touching on various themes, he enriching them all by drawing from his well-stored mind, and spicing them with his rare originality, while she, contrary to her wont, mingled but little in the conversation, and sat on her slow-pacing steed as in a dream. There

was a heightened color in her cheeks; whether produced by the pleasure of listening to his discourse, or by the crisp and fresh mountain air, he could not determine. But whatever was the source of the glow, it caused a counterglow in his heart, and for the time he was happy, although he had as yet received no such assurances as the heart of a lover unceasingly thirsts after—although still, still she delayed, while lending a pleased ear to the dulcet tale which with eloquent variations he poured, at frequent intermissions in his talk, into her ear and heart—although still came not

“Das erste Ja der Liebe,”

for which his soul hungered.

Had she decided upon giving that affirmation? Was her heart willing finally to execute the deed of cession which her inclinations had drawn?

The refrain of an old Scotch song ran in her thoughts:

“Na’ yet; na’ yet;
I maun forget
The nonce love’s dotin’ pressure.
Haud yet aback,
Whiles I can tak’
My sairly pressed heart’s measure.”

CHAPTER XXX.

WHERE THE DRUIDS MIGHT HAVE HELD THEIR
RITES.

At the store at the cross-roads Chenowith bought not only all the twine the monopolizing mountain merchant had on hand, but the greater portion of his stock of candies and other sweetmeats, and of everything else of interest or delight to children; so that the two shoppers returned with their horses overpacked with things to make glad the hearts of the youngsters of the settlement.

On the way back Grace was more talkative than in going, and bore more than her accustomed share in the conversation. It was her turn to be diffusive, while enriching her discourse with the indefinable charm which never failed to invest it; and it was Chenowith's turn to listen enchanted.

A bird had begun to sing in Grace's heart a song of content, and its refrain rang in her tones. She had doubted within herself whether she should ever again feel toward Chenowith exactly as she had once felt—whether she should again get

upon the highway leading to love. But during her ride to and this return from the cross-roads, that sweet confidence which is love's forerunner had filled all the ducts connecting with affection's reservoir, and there was a resultant joy in her breast that she had no inclination to conceal.

Chenowith was too keenly delighted with the enlivening play of his companion's fancy to seek to press upon her love's imperious inquisition, or its obtrusive catechism; and therefore they reached the settlement without any tender word having been spoken by him during the homeward ride.

While supper was in course of preparation, Grace devoted herself to the pleasant task of distributing among the young people the generous stock of good things which had been purchased for them, and Chenowith set himself to work attaching the strings to the kites.

When Grace had completed the distribution and made a community of youngsters happy, she took a seat near where Chenowith was at work and asked:

"Can't I assist you?"

"No, I thank you; I am nearly done; but you may talk or sing to me, and I will listen closely, though I do not join in."

"Ah, that reminds me," she said. "I

have learned a new song since I met you last, which I believe I will sing for you. Jimmy, please bring me your father's fiddle."

"What!" he exclaimed, "do you play on the violin?"

"I play on the *fiddle*," she responded. "Violin is a term for a lower atmosphere than this."

"But why haven't I known this fact before? I have lost a good deal during my acquaintance with you, for I am wedded to the melody of that instrument," he replied.

"I had peculiar reasons for not having this acquisition known," she returned. "It has been of material use to me in my detective operations. I played the fiddle at a notable Moonshiners' dance disguised as a strolling Italian musician. Uncle Pete and Banty Jim completed the orchestra. It was at this dance that I gathered the information leading up to the raid in which you and I participated."

The lad having returned with the fiddle, Grace sang, with the accompaniment of the instrument, the song she had composed at Tybee.

"Well," she asked at the conclusion of the piece, "tell me frankly how you like it."

"I am too much interested in the sentiment of the song," he responded, "to cri-

ticise or even remark on its construction. But I will say this: if Grace Thorndike did not write it, she inspired it. It is like her. It harmonizes with her life, and thought, and ways. It is true to her spirit, true to her heart, and true to her better impulses and finer sensibilities."

The encomium, glowing as it was, and intensely gratifying to Grace, was a higher one than she dreamed of obtaining even from him; and yet it did not touch either the rhythmical construction of the song or the air, nor yet the execution of the piece. As they went to supper, and during the partaking of the savory collation, Grace's tongue seemed unloosed, and her talk was like the blithe caroling of a mating woodland songster. At the close of the meal Grace informed Chenowith, with no fear of their non-acceptance, that arrangements had been made in one of the cabins for keeping him over night.

At an early hour the cotters betook themselves to rest, leaving the two guests with the best part of the evening before them.

The starlight and the moonlight vied with each other in filling earth with supernal glory. The atmosphere was as still as if listening to the music of the spheres. The whippoorwill alone called from a distance; all creatures besides in

the realm of animated nature had sunk to rest.

Grace had during the week selected several woodland paths in which to saunter in the few hours of relaxation from her self-imposed tasks; and along one of these she guided Chenowith, that together they might enjoy the beauty and grandeur of the forest by night as they had enjoyed them by day.

. . . They had come to an opening, where, if it had been in the mountains of Wales, one might have said the Druids had once had their altar; for here was the sacrificial stone, and near by was a gigantic oak whose life reached back into the forgotten centuries.

A meet spot for the sacrifice. Was she ready for the oblation?

“Na’ yet; na’ yet.”

But there stood the priest before her, impatient for the rite.

Their conversation had been as opulent as it was in the afternoon, though it had impinged but slightly on the topic of love. But now, with something of abruptness, Chenowith said:

“Miss Grace, here, in this sublime mingling of the light of the moon and that of the kindly stars; here, by this ancient giant

of the forest, which one might fancy to be the 'talking oak' of Sumner Chace; here, in the presence of the hosts of Heaven, who must be looking down upon earth on such a night as this—here I demand your heart. It is mine by all the laws that govern human affections; it is mine by the right of conquest."

There was an intense earnestness in his tone; there was an unwonted gleam in his eye. Grace well-nigh quailed before him. She who had never known an emotion of fear, stood now in admiring awe of his superlative positiveness; and a less strong and self-retentive heart than hers would have yielded on the spot, and "grounded the weapons of her rebellion." But she remained outwardly calm, though within her was going on a struggle, the issue of which her wiser and better self could not in that hour determine.

In a low voice, which had in it a perceptible tremor, she said:

"I cannot now give you what you ask."

He started back. He was terribly disappointed. He had made sure of victory. He had no words to return for her refusal. He only looked in her eye with an expression of saddened defeat.

She held out her hand to him—her soft, white hand, which but that afternoon he had pressed to his lips, a tenderness upon

which he would not now think of venturing—and said:

“Do not say anything harsh to me: I could not endure it.”

There was a weirdly plaintive pleading in her tones which, more than the words she uttered, touched him to the heart.

He took the hand he held and placed the tips of the fingers reverently to his lips (a movement widely different in essence from, though so similar in form with, that of the afternoon, and which she did not in the least seek to prevent), and gently expostulated:

“Did you deem me capable of harshness to you in word or thought?”

“Hardly; but I was afraid that your impatience might find expression in some utterance on your part that would unintentionally cause a wound to my heart.”

“Why, Miss Grace, the angels in Heaven could not be tenderer than I would be to you.”

A tear gathered in her eye and fell upon the hand holding hers—still holding hers unresistingly; the first tear he had ever seen her shed.

“Take my arm,” he gently said, “and let us return to the settlement.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN UNCANNY DREAM.

Grace Thorndike sought her rude but neat and comfortable couch with feelings such as not infrequently attend the heart's uncertainty in spirits attuned like hers. To be truly and strongly loved by a man of the depth of nature possessed by Reginald Chenowith, could not be otherwise than greatly satisfying to her heart, even though she could not return such love in its richest plenitude. It was a homage of which any woman might truly be proud, and imparted a pleasure to which rarely could a woman be insensible.

There was a certain keen enjoyment—not unmingled, it is true, with a delicate pain—in dwelling, as Grace had done for weeks, on the borderland between inclination and decision, especially when she held command of the neutral province—when it was for her to speak the word to cross the border.

The genial and gentle demeanor of Chenowith while urging his suit, was intensely soothing to her perplexed heart; and while

the gnome of indecision yet cast its shadow upon her thoughts, she had sufficient comfort in the passing hour to induce the inception of a sound sleep.

—But it was only the inception. For she had not been slumbering over an hour when there stood before her, as real as in her waking hours, the form of Geoffrey Bannister, who spoke to her these words:

“Does the heart change so quickly?”

She replied to him:

“My heart can never change toward you. You will ever be cherished as the ideal of a higher existence which has escaped me.”

“But how can you reconcile such an assertion,” said the apparition, “with so sudden a transfer of affection?”

Then in her dream she was wounded in spirit, and replied:

“Why have you not on this account murmured hitherto? Why did you not redeem my heart when you recently had an opportunity to do so? Here, in this very hamlet, you could have wrought an annulment of my decision; yet you refrained from taking possession of a heart which would have been yours in faithfulness through all the years. Are the words you have uttered kind or generous? Are they worthy of you?”

Then the spirit seemed bowed, humbled, and pained, and replied:

"No, no; they are unworthy of me. But I can not leave you without your forgiveness. Your memory is my life. I can not endure your disfavor."

And after these expressions, ere she could utter the words of forgiveness which were on her lips, he turned away with a look of ineffable sadness, and she awoke—awoke in tears, and to sleep no further.

—Long she lay upon her bed, her only relief being in weeping; for the wound she had received in her dream was still bleeding. She sought in vain to shake off the effect of the vision, and to realize that it was but a phantom of the brain; but she did not succeed. Nor could she again woo the god of slumber. At length, worn with tossing on her pillow, she rose and dressed herself and walked out beneath the shining stars, and after a few moments of reflection made her way to the shed and saddled her faithful horse, without any definite purpose other than that of giving occupation to her thoughts.

At first she rode along the woodland path through which she had so recently wandered with Chenowith, until she came to the opening where he had with such impassioned words addressed her. Then she sat still upon her horse for some moments; and while pausing, the thought came to her that she could not meet Chenowith in the

morning; and then followed the ungracious idea of not again appearing in the settlement, but of riding at once homeward.

For she was very miserable. Her dream had become more real to her than reality itself. . . . But what would the honest dwellers in the little hamlet think of such a flight in the shadows of the night? No, that would not do.

Still in uncertainty, she started her horse into the road which Chenowith and she had traversed during the previous afternoon; and as she galloped along over the crisp leaves, all the glowing words he had said to her went rushing through her mind, and the strange feeling came over her that it was all a mockery—a travesty on the holy sentiment of love, both on his part to utter and on her part to listen to the sentiments he had expressed. Her conscience, morbidly active, taunted her with enacting the queen-mother in Hamlet, permitting the “funeral baked meats” of the heart’s all too brief widowhood to “coldly furnish forth the marriage-feast” of a new attachment.

She rode as far as the forks of the road, where Chenowith and she had made their purchases, and then returned, walking her horse, and realizing somewhat more of a calmness of spirit. But still the demon of unrest had possession of her, and the senti-

ment of self-condemnation ruled the hour. Bitter were her thoughts in the main, and bitter were the tears she freely shed.

At length she returned to the settlement before the first streaks of day were breaking, and managed to put up her horse and reach her bed without disturbing any of the heavy sleepers. The night's fatigue and anguish of spirit at last brought troubled slumber; and the recollection of the promise she had made to Chenowith to take a walk with him before breakfast was eliminated by the experience of the night.

When Chenowith called for her at her cabin, he was told she was still sleeping; and when he called later to take breakfast with her, as he had agreed to, the good-wife surprised him by the announcement that Miss Thorndike had passed an uncomfortable night, and was feeling too badly to be disturbed. So he ate his breakfast alone, and entered upon the task of entertaining the lads by assisting them in flying their kites.

The forenoon wore away, and toward noon, having several times inquired after the condition of Grace, he called at the cabin and found her sitting at the table and taking a cup of tea.

And how changed! The eyes swollen from long weeping, the face wearing an expression of pain and trouble which could

not be concealed—was this the genial and blithe-spirited being from whom he had parted in the glowing starlight?

She greeted him kindly, but not cheerfully. Had her ill been a physical one, there was no reason why she should not meet him with her accustomed geniality. He at once perceived that something had occurred to cause a temporary revulsion of feeling—something, he concluded, of the same nature as that which caused her seclusion at home, followed by her retreat hither. What that something was, was as great a mystery to him now as it had then been. But, profoundly pained as he was by this development, he was not disconcerted nor discouraged. He abated nothing of his tenderness toward her, and in the kindest terms told her of the grand time he had had with the youngsters during the morning, in flying their kites and in other ways.

“You have keen knowledge of human nature,” she said, “especially the nature of children; and you have a deep vein of humanity within you.”

“Thank you,” he responded; “a finer encomium I could not desire. Now, I think I can demonstrate to you that I have some knowledge of the nature of women as well as of children. I have a fancy, Miss Grace, that the greatest kindness I could do you

at this time would be to mount my horse and ride back to the city, and leave you here to yourself until you feel like returning."

Chenowith had hit the mark more nearly than he had intended; for the very thought that was in Grace's mind at the time was that expressed by him. In fact, she was startled by his accuracy of divination.

And then occurred one of those singular psychological contradictions which occasionally dot the line of human conduct, never explained and forever unexplainable.

Grace Thorndike, seeing at hand the realization of her wish, suddenly experienced a reversion of feeling concerning that object, and shrank from the carrying out of Chenowith's suggestion to return home. Fearful lest he should do so, she inquired of him:

"In case I do not insist on your staying, shall you return?"

"I shall."

"Then I insist on your staying."

"Enough said. As I am going to stay, I shall go nutting with the boys and girls, and Nellie Drain [a young girl whom Grace had taken a notion to] is going along; and I promised her to ask you for your horse for her, as I knew you would not be strong enough to go."

"Certainly she shall have it."

"Now, don't sit up for us to come back, for we may be late. Go to bed early, and get a good sleep. I shall look to see you better in the morning."

Grace did not fail to recognize in this action on his part a delicate move to leave her to her own reflections during the day. "He is ever the same," she thought—"disinterested, discriminating, instinctively, studiously tender."

After the nutting expedition had gotten off, she went out in front of the cabin and sat in the sunlight, with some light sewing in her lap; and as the absence of the young people left the camp quiet, she had the whole afternoon to her undisturbed reflections.

It can not be denied that when the nervous agitation resulting from her dream was calmed down, and she obtained rest from the wearying wakefulness of the night, Grace was inclined to view things in a somewhat different light from what she had done *during* the midnight shadows. Of Chenoweth she could not refrain from thoughts like these:

"When he manifested so much patience, so much indulgence, so much loving-kindness, after my strange revulsion of feeling and alteration of demeanor, and when I looked into his calm, clear eyes, my wrong in inclining to love him did not seem the

base perfidy that it did when contemplated behind the curtain and in the silence of the night."

But her meditations reverted back from Chenowith to herself, and she began a rigid process of self-examination, and in this process found something further for which to condemn herself than she had found in the conscience-smittings which her dream had set in operation. She could now see that she had erred in not opening her whole heart to Chenowith—or, rather, in not continuing to him, after her first reversion of feeling and sympathy caused by Bannister's heroic conflict with the Moonshiners, the same frankness of expression that she had adopted up to that time. Her essential trouble began when she concealed from him the cause of her temporary seclusion, and continued when she failed to inform him of her meeting with Bannister in the settlement.

After long pondering over this subject, she resolved to make a clean breast of the whole matter to Chenowith before they left the settlement, leaving the result to work itself out, whichever way it might.

The birth of this idea in her mind, and its ripening into a resolution, brought surcease to her unquiet breast. She began to watch anxiously for the return of the nutting-party; and when the crowd was heard

approaching with noisy glee, Chenowith and Nellie leading their bag-laden animals—the former apparently the most of a youngster of the whole lot—Grace ran out to meet them with an expression of countenance which to Chenowith was no less surprising than gratifying.

Grace bustled cheerily around and assisted in getting Chenowith's supper ready, and together they sat down to a well-cooked meal; and, ravenous as he was with hunger, he was overjoyed to see her vying with him in doing justice to the homely but toothsome viands.

"Now," she said, when the meal was finished, speaking in her old cheerful tone, "I'm going to take your advice and go to bed early; and I want to bespeak your company for a long ride which I would like to take to-morrow—a ride around the brow of the mountain. Will you go?"

"Yes; but how can you stand such a ride?"

"Oh, I shall be as bright to-morrow morning as a newly coined dollar."

"You must promise, however, to let me do most of the talking, for in so light an atmosphere as we shall be in, talking is liable to injure the lungs."

"No, I can't promise that, at all—in fact, I want to bear the burden of the conversa-

tion myself, for I have very, very much to say."

Chenowith's heart bounded at this utterance, for he felt that it involved the solution of a mystery that had brooded over him for weeks.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A HEART UNBURDENED.

Bright and early the next morning, Chenowith was astir, tasting the fresh mountain atmosphere; and bright and early, too, the clear and melodious voice of Grace Thorndike rang on the resonant air, singing a favorite song of Chenowith's—

“ ‘Twas within a mile of Edinboro’ toun.”

“What brings you out at this hour?” he asked.

“A desire to have that ante-breakfast walk with you which I defrauded you of yesterday morning.”

“Good!” he said; “and Nellie shall go with us, for here she comes, as bright and fresh as yourself.”

Grace led the way along one of her chosen woodland paths, but not the one leading to the Druidical altar. Neither was inclined on this occasion toward an interchange of tender sentiment.

“Nellie,” said Grace, “I hope you had a good time at your nutting-party yesterday.”

"A right splendid time, Miss Grace."

"And you didn't even send me an invitation! I was coolly informed that I had better remain at home."

"That was along uv yo' bein' under the weather-like, an' Mistah Chenowith he thought ez how the trip mout be too much fur yo'."

"Yes, that is a shrewd diplomatic way of getting rid of undesirable company. But tell me, Nellie, how did Mr. Chenowith conduct himself? I suppose he looked on and let you-all gather the nuts."

"Oh, no—jes' the *contrary*, Miss Grace. He wuz the hustlin'st one uv the hull crowd. You'd oughter seen him climbin' the big trees. He done skun up 'em ez lively as a woodchuck."

"And while I was climbing one tree, Nellie would be climbing another," interposed Chenowith.

"O, Nellie!" exclaimed Grace.

"They wuz little trees, Miss Grace," said Nellie, deprecatingly.

"Don't be shamed by her, Nellie; I shouldn't wonder if she did the same thing when she and you went nutting. Tell me, now, honestly, Nellie, didn't she?"

"Tell old Mr. Inquisitor what you please, Nellie."

"Wall, Mistuh Chenerwith, I don't reckon hit's any hahm, what Miss Grace done;

but hit's the truth that she done clumb up them big wa'nut trees jes lak' a squirl."

"O, Miss Grace!" exclaimed Chenowith.

"But she done had on men's clo's, Mistuh Chenowith."

"Well, we were both in the same fix, and I don't reckon we made bad looking young fellows," said Grace.

"'Deed we didn't," affirmed the forest damsel.

"Nellie," said Chenowith, "if there is any feat of agility that Miss Grace is incapable of, I would like to know what it is. Why, I give you my word that on Tybee beach she and I ran a foot-race together in the presence of a big crowd, and, though at college I was considered the swiftest runner of my class, I beat her only by a neck."

"And he wouldn't have done that, Nellie, but he had the start of me."

"'Deed, an' wouldn't I liked ter hev done seen that race!" exclaimed the girl with enthusiasm.

"But I haven't told you all, Nellie. After that, she swam against the tide in her ordinary clothes, holding up a woman at the same time."

"That shu'ly beats anything I ever heerd!" said the girl. "But why didn't yo' hev on a bathin' suit, Miss Grace?"

"I didn't have time to put one on."

The girl looked puzzled.

"The best of it is yet to come, good Nellie," said Chenowith, gazing admiringly at Grace. "She was saving the woman from drowning."

Grace was about to add to the story the part which Chenowith bore in the episode, when Nellie sprang at her with the celerity of a wildcat, clasped her in her arms, and rained kisses upon her lips. The tears came to Grace's eyes—far healthier tears than she had shed during the previous day. For some moments she remained speechless under this demonstration; and then she said through her tears:

"While I was saving one woman, Nellie, he was saving another."

The girl looked at Chenowith as if she would have liked to repeat upon him the process she had applied to Grace; but she desisted, and contented herself with saying to Grace, while glancing with glowing admiration at Chenowith:

"He's desarvin' ter be loved mighty powerful by er right big an' true hea't, Miss Grace."

"I reckon that is pretty nearly the fact, Nellie," was the reply, "if he can ever find such a one."

"Since I missed you yesterday morning, Miss Grace," said Chenowith, "I have been trying my hand, in the intervals between flying kites and gathering nuts, at a com-

panion-piece to the song you sang for me night before last; and I should be glad if you could find or compose an air as well fitted to it as the one you arranged for your own piece. Nellie shall participate in the criticism of my production."

He then read the following:

LOVE'S TENSION.

Do you ask why glows in song
This the love I've harbored long?

Sweeter than low trills of birds
Are my darling's loving words;
Brighter than charmed sunlit isles
Are my darling's dimpled smiles;
Clearer than the opal's hue
Are my darling's eyes of blue;
Fairer than all fair designs
Are her beauty's curving lines.

Shall I tell you why so strong
Is the love I've nourished long?

Seems my soul past tide and time
Lifted up to heights sublime,
Seems my heart with rapture filled,
Seems my breast with rare joy thrilled,
By this love of power divine
Human phrase can ne'er define,
Quickened by perennial growth,
Dowered with immortal youth.

Fondly I of love so strong
Tell in story and in song.

So my darling, with weird spell,
With a tension none can tell,
Holds each finer thought of brain;
Holds the pulsing of each vein;
Great of heart and sweet of mein,
Ruling all my realm terrene,
All my weal and all my wold,
Holds my heart in chains of gold.

This my love as life is long;
This my love as death is strong.

"Well, what do you think of it, Nellie?"
asked Grace.

"Ter my notion, hit's wond'ful nice, Miss
Grace—nicer'n yo'n that yo' done sung
with the fiddle, ef I mus' say so."

"Why, Nellie! You're falling into the
ways of coquetry. Don't you know that of
all creatures on the face of this earth a man
is the vainest, and most easily spoiled by
flattery?"

"Nellie," retorted Chenowith, "beware of
jealousy! By that sin fell some, at least,
of the angels. But I can smell the coffee,
even at this distance, and I hear them call-
ing. Let's return."

And, with Nellie's arm around Grace,

the three walked back to a smoking breakfast.

Grace and Chenowith started on their ride, prepared for an all-day jaunt. Grace had made the trip once before, and was enabled to point out to her companion the many commanding and interesting views on the way.

During her whole stay on the mountain, one fair day had succeeded another like a procession of beatified saints; and this day seemed the crowning one of the whole. As Grace had told Chenowith she would be, she was fresh and bright; and she had never seemed to him in more cheerful spirits. They galloped along at a lively gait, chatting pleasantly on things current, until they came to a sharp ascent, when they were obliged to walk their horses.

"Here," she said, "as we begin to climb into a higher atmosphere, I will, with your consent, drop the topics of day-unto-day concern, and enter upon the theme that is of deeper interest to us both.

"But, first, I want to put a question to you of vital moment, to which I am not certain as to the answer I shall get. The question is this: Would you accept me as a wife if you were not clear and confident as to the condition of my heart? In other

words, would you take me on an uncertainty, trusting to the future to resolve it into a certainty?"

"I would not," he answered.

"Many men would do so, however," she returned; "and some true men have so done, and found faithful and devoted love as the ripened fruit of their trust."

Chenowith turned in his saddle and bent on her a look of impatient surprise, as if she were seeking to induce him to accept her own heart under such conditions; and slowly responded in a tone which, more than the words uttered, seemed to her to have the least ring of ungraciousness:

"Yes, Miss Grace, I have known such cases in my own experience, but no one will ever have occasion to tell of me as an exemplar of this strangest of all heart methods."

"Well," she replied most cordially, "I regard you the more highly that you take such a position. It is the position I have wanted you to take, and feared you would not. Now, this clears the way for my imparting to you what I should have done before, but what it is not too late to do now."

"The Roman Catholics tell me that there is a beneficent provision in their faith, that, where there is no priest at hand, confession may be made to and absolution pronounced

by a layman, in certain emergencies. I am going to improvise a father confessor out of yourself, and after you hear my confession, you may complete the shriving by absolution or not, as you deem me worthy or unworthy."

Then she told him all the story of her heart's swerving after the heroic conflict of Bannister with the Moonshiners, of her sequestration, and the wearying inward struggle she had had, until she fondly thought she had found peace, when she was suddenly wakened to renewed agitation by the startling dream in the woodman's cabin.

It was a long tale, but never was told tale less tedious to the listener. She had not hurried in the narration, for from time to time she had paused to call her companion's attention to features of sublimity or beauty in the scenery surrounding them. At the conclusion of her story, they were at the summit of the mountain.

"Now," she continued, "what I have to ask of you further is, not to come to a decision at present on my case as I have presented it to you, nor to ask me for a decision; but after we have both slept on the matter, or at least after we have returned to the city, let us take our bearings with care and in sincerity, and if we are to be lovers, well and good; if not, we will be

friends, and will have the satisfaction of having never deceived each other."

"There is my hand," said Chenowith, taking off his glove and reaching for her hand, which, also ungloved, clasped his in ratification of the agreement. "You have spoken to me as from soul to soul. And here, on this lofty height, far above the haunts of men, and far removed from the passions and conflicts of existence, I join you in the resolution that if we can not greatly love, we will at least link our sentiments and sympathies in a friendship that shall be lasting, elevating, and strengthening."

From this time to the end of the trip, their discourse was of as diversified a character as on the day when they rode to the forks of the road. No word of affection was spoken by Chenowith, and the armistice they had agreed on gave them such a degree of unrestraint that, when they reached the settlement, each was in as agreeable a mood as if nothing of import had occurred during the trip, or was awaiting a decision in the nearing days.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

In the morning of the next day came the preparations for the departure of Chenowith and Grace for home. Their horses were saddled ready for the trip. Grace had bidden good-bye to all the cottagers successively, and most of them were now gathered to speed the parting guests. Grace was mounted, but not Chenowith.

"I have neglected something I intended to do," said Grace. "Nellie, come here," she continued, calling to the companion of her morning stroll with Chenowith. "You remember that those shoes of yours which you let me wear the day we went nutting together, just fitted me. For a particular reason, I want them now: please bring them."

Nellie brought the shoes, wondering what Miss Grace could possibly want with them.

Grace then, lifting her riding-habit, said to Chenowith:

"May I ask you to do a service for me that you did once before? It is to unlace

my boots; but you have no occasion this time to use a knife."

Chenowith obeyed, with as much wonder as Nellie had manifested. While engaged in the act, he said, in further surprise:

"Why, Miss Grace, you've got the wrong side-saddle. This isn't yours—it's an old one of Nellie's I saw in the shed. I surely put your saddle on your horse with my own hands."

"Sh! Be quiet!" she replied. "I changed the saddles myself, and left a little note on Nellie's, giving mine to her. And this explains why I asked you to unlace my boots—I didn't want Nellie to detect the change I had made."

This conversation occurred while the girl was gone to bring Grace the designated shoes. When she returned with the articles, which were a coarse pair that she only wore on rough occasions, Grace further said to Chenowith:

"Now, if you will remove my boots, you will save me the trouble of dismounting."

Again he complied, and was rewarded by seeing the smallest and shapeliest feet he had ever observed on a female.

"One good turn deserves another," she resumed. "Now, please draw these shoes upon my feet. And, Nellie, please keep those boots to remember me with. You will find them good ones, for I had them

made of leather of my own choosing. I'm sure they'll fit you." (Grace had observed the girl trying them on admiringly.)

"Oh, Miss Grace, I'se so thankful!" exclaimed Nellie. "But hit'll nevah do fo' yo' ter w'ar them ole shoes o' mine inter the burg!"

"My riding-skirt, Nellie, like charity, will cover these, with other defects. But, Nellie, wait a moment. Here is a scarf that you may wear at that mountain Hallowe'en party you are going to, [taking from her neck a costly article;] I shan't need it going home. And here is a brooch [taking a beautiful one from her breast] for you to wear on the same occasion, and when your sweetheart comes to see you. Keep them to remind you of your fellow tree-climber—not *you* [to Chenowith]. And, on second thought, I believe I shan't need this shawl, which you can give to your mother;" throwing the girl a fine India shawl which she took from her shoulders.

"Why, Miss Grace, yo's got onter yo' Mam's jacket by mistake," said Nellie through the tears of gratitude she was shedding. "I'll go an' get yo's fo' yo'."

"No, Nellie, it's all right. I exchanged wraps with your mother by agreement. Now, one thing more, Nellie, and I'm done. Give me your hat."

Nellie complied, and reached Grace a

worn-out sailor-hat, while Grace took from her own head a jaunty hat of the newest pattern, and, calling the girl to her, placed it upon her head, while the women present declared the hat "done fitted huh right peert."

Meantime Chenowith, who, having no faith in the endurance of Nellie's shakly side-saddle, went to the shed for an extra surcingle, on his way stopped at the cabin where he had domiciled while in the settlement, and in the absence of its occupant, burglarized it, taking an old shabby hat, an under and overcoat, a pair of "stogy" shoes, and some other articles, and leaving in their places his own fine wool hat, coats, etc., and coming thence completely transmogrified, so that a salvo of laughter greeted him on his reappearance, Grace joining in most heartily of all the spectators.

"What on earth have you been doing?" she asked Chenowith. "You remind me of the boy to whom his mother said, after he had emerged from a 'scrap': 'Johnny, you look lak' you'd gone through er thrashin'-merchine, an' arter that ben trod onter by the horses.'"

"Why, I fancied I looked very nicely," Chenowith replied. "Añd, at least," he continued, "I flatter myself that my ap-

pearance will favorably compare with yours!"

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," she smilingly responded. "You've beaten me at my own game."

Chenowith now mounted his horse, and, amid an enthusiastic send-off by the assembled cottagers, the two guests rode away.

Among the first things that Grace said after they were fairly on the road, was this:

"Reginald, do you know that I had something to tell you this morning, which, in the hurry of the preparations for starting, I neglected?"

"Reginald!" It was the first time she had called him by his Christian name. His heart leaped with joy, which, however, he repressed, and he replied in a careless tone:

"Of course I am consumed with anxiety to know what it is."

"No, you're not—you miserable deceiver, you don't care what it is! I've a good notion not to tell it to you!"

There was a light in her eye which stirred his spirit, and made all his pulses beat more quickly. In a more earnest tone he said, for the first time leaving off the "Miss":

"Tell me, Grace, what it is."

"Reginald, I love you."

Notwithstanding his joy, he could not resist the temptation to respond:

"I knew you did."

"Reginald, on examining my heart, I find that I have been loving you for some time."

"I knew you had."

"Reginald, I will be your wife—if you want me to."

"I knew you would."

"Reginald, I will be a true wife to you—O, so true!"

"Ride up close, then, so that I can make you seal your promise with a kiss, before you change your mind."

"There you are with your old imperiousness—ordering me around already! But [surveying him from head to foot, and indulging in a peal of laughter], isn't that a tough looking object to ask any white woman to kiss?"

"If I looked as much of a fright as somebody else," he retorted, "I shouldn't want to kiss or be kissed. In what I am going to do, I am actuated purely by motives of duty."

"Well, do your duty quickly, then."

And with this, having brought her horse beside his, she sprang rather than leaned forward into the arms held out to embrace her, with an agility possible to none but so adept a horswoman as she. And while she was thus a tenant of those

strong arms, she smiled through her tears, and wept through her smiles; the steeds, meanwhile, like the sensible beasts they were, going at a slow pace, and keeping side by side, to accommodate their bliss-tasting riders.

When Grace was back in her seat, she said:

“Reginald?”

“Grace?”

“You haven’t said a word about my confession, or Mr. Bannister, or my dream.”

“There is nothing to say, Grace, except that I found nothing in all your revelation to me to condemn, and nothing to impeach your love for me. Whatever may have been your feelings with regard to Mr. Bannister, at any time, were a noble tribute to a noble man, which I have had and have now no inclination to call into review.”

“I shall kiss you again for that, Reginald, whether you will or no.”

And again the horses were side by side, and again they adapted their movements to the motions of their riders.

Right here, in addition to what Reginald Chenowith had thus said of his position toward Mr. Bannister, it is meet that this last tribute should be paid to the rector’s successful rival.

Great of heart, clear of brain, and discriminating in judgment, he had recog-

nized the fact that the difficulties which lay in the path of Grace Thorndike's affections were in no wise such as coquetry often brings, nor the result of indiscreet conduct on her part; that the issues presented before her heart were such as often occur in human destiny, and were to be settled, if settled at all, by the exercise of the highest qualities of her womanhood—such qualities as she had demonstrated beneath his own eye. He had made full and abiding faith in her a part of his life, and thought and wrought up to that standard and along that line. He had steadily refrained from permitting himself to be led into a jealousy of, a struggle against, or a depreciation of Geoffrey Bannister. It had appeared to him that in the allotment of fate, the heart of Grace Thorndike was assigned to his share; and, scorning to make use of any but manly means in winning his suit, by such means he had won it nobly.

—With this interruption we leave the lovers to pursue their glad colloquy:

“And, Reginald?”

“Yes, Grace?”

“Do you love me as well on this dusty, traveled road, and in the broad glare of the sun, as you did the other day in the woodland lane, amid the solemn stillness and enchanting shades of the forest, with the

carpet of leaves under our feet, and the birds caroling over our heads?"

"Every whit as well, Grace, and, if it were possible, better."

"You are right sure of it, Reginald?"

"Right sure, Grace."



And so they rode down from the mountains of delight, along the unbordered, prosy highway of reality, into the thronged valley of duty; and then they walked together the ways of men, and resumed the struggle of life, in all earnestness of purpose, and with a love having foundations the deepest and surest, and enhancing in strength with the seasons and years.

THE END.

